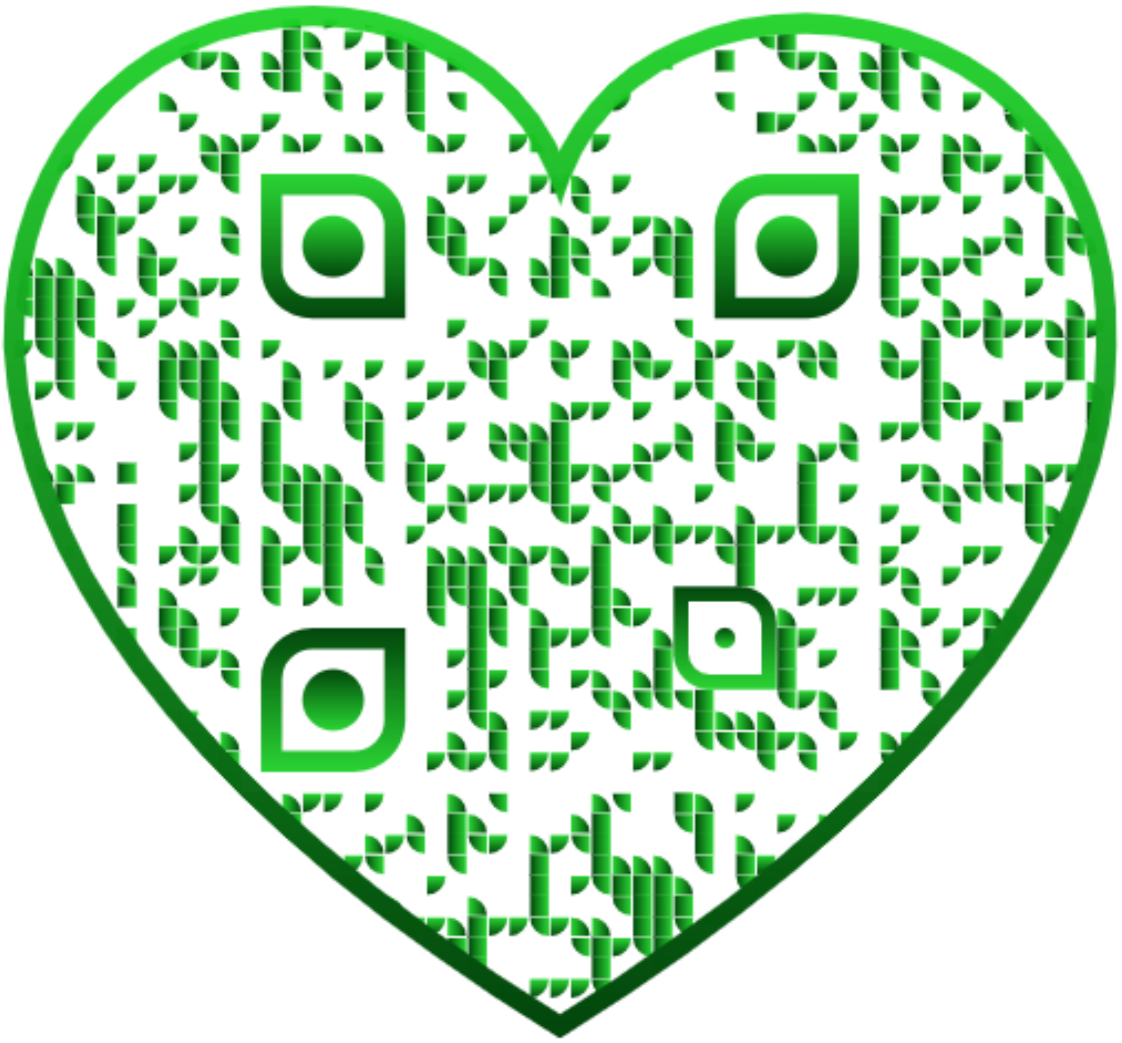
Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Winston Wu



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Praises and Reviews

"Pseudo-skepticism, by promoting views of doubtful validity, can seriously distort the scientific enterprise. It is good that an organisation such as SCEPCOP exists that can bring to light manifest flaws in the pseudo-skeptical position."

– Brian Josephson, Nobel Prize Winner in Physics, Emeritus Professor of Physics at Cambridge University, now a SCEPCOP member

"I think your SCEPCOP project is excellent! Very much needed...
True skepticism is a courageous thing, requiring openness and honesty on the skeptic's part to question the truth of everything he or she thinks they know…not just questioning the things they don't like…. Pseudo-skepticism is common, true skepticism is rare."

– Dr. Charles Tart, esteemed Psychologist and Consciousness Researcher for 50 years, Author of The End of Materialism

"For years, dogmatic skeptics have portrayed themselves as defenders of science and reason, and have bullied journalists into accepting their claims. They have pretended to speak on behalf of the mainstream science. SCEPCOP is doing a great job in helping to expose these pretensions, and in revealing how the claims of militant skeptics are often unscientific and unreasonable, as well as being arrogant and ignorant."

– Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, Renowned Telepathy/Consciousness Researcher, Biologist and Author

"Winston Wu has done a comprehensive job of applying an antidote to the intellectual poison that mainstream skeptics apply to the world's body of scientific knowledge. If only more people were aware of how sordid the skeptic tactics can be. If you're not aware of this issue, please use Winston's site to expand your own base of knowledge."

– Lloyd Pye, Author of Everything You Know Is Wrong and Head Researcher of The Starchild Project

"Genuine skepticism is indispensable to the progress of science, but nothing retards scientific progress like the blind, stubborn, repetitive naysaying of the pseudo-skeptics. In the arc of history, the greatest ideas have often come from the margins of the intellectual world, often from renegade thinkers. Pseudo-skepticism typically rejects these developments not through insight, but through prejudice and bigotry. Let us applaud genuine skepticism, and let us be skeptics ourselves; but let us stand firm against pseudo-skepticism and expose it for what it is: a renunciation of creativity, reason, and human progress. SCEPCOP is a valuable step in this direction."

- Larry Dossey, MD, Author of The Power of Premonitions, Healing Words and Reinventing Medicine

“Winston Wu has now written an essay that brilliantly and decisively rebuts the general skeptical arguments against the paranormal. This is among the best essays ever written on this subject, and deserves extensive study. The essay carefully moves through the entire skeptical lexicon of arguments, rebutting each in turn."

– Whitley Strieber, Author and Radio Host of UnknownCountry.com

“Your treatise "debunking pseudoskeptical arguments of paranormal debunkers" is the best refutation of pseudoskeptics' arguments, tactics and fallacies to reject the evidence for paranormal phenomena. I've recommended your article to every person that I know.”

– Deya, Spain

“I'm Jürgen and I write you from Germany. Let me tell that your article about debunkers/pseudoskeptics of PSI is the best handbook to debate with them. I used to debate pseudoskeptics as a pastime, using the arguments and tactics of your article.”

– Jürgen, Germany

“Your article "debunking pseudoskeptical arguments on paranormal debunkers" is a must read to any person who seeks to understand the nature of pseudoskepticism… Your article was the first on-line resource to expose the fallacies, motivation, agenda and dishonesty of pseudoskeptics.”

– Jessica Parker, USA

More Reviews at:
http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/praises.php

“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”
- Søren Kierkegaard, Danish philospher

“Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.”
- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

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Winston Wu

Smashwords Edition

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The Happier Abroad Guide to Global Dating For Men

Winston's Guide to Traveling and Dating in Russia

Available at HappierAbroad.com, Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and Smashwords.com

Foreword by Victor Zammit

This is the definitive book on pseudo-skepticism. What author Winston Wu has to tell the world will have a huge effect on how we deal with invalid objections to evidence for the paranormal and other unconventional phenomena. It will be a memorable and lasting contribution that will never date.

Winston undoubtedly has shown that he has *authority* on pseudo-skepticism. I have known Winston for many years and can attest to the skill and endurance with which he has gone into combat with those who try to debunk the paranormal. He has deliberately provoked and prodded - and has had thrown at him every unfair, unreasonable and deceptive argument that they could come up with. I know well the intensity of the attacks because those who attacked Winston attacked me as well.

But those attacks were not analytical – they were descriptive and did not rebut the evidence. In this book Winston takes the throw away lines, the "red herrings" and logical fallacies frequently used by the pseudo-skeptic and systematically shows why they are not valid. His contribution is one that transcends subjectivity, prejudices and bias and appeals to value-free objectivity and repeatability – two ingredients that are most fundamental when testing the paranormal for validity.

Winston shows – and I totally agree with him – that his critics do not have the skills, the capacity and the ability to perceive objective evidence with true empirical equanimity. He points out that open minded skeptics – the true, genuine 'skeptics' – initially doubt any proposition made. By being open minded, they can discriminate between objective, repeatable evidence and anecdotal or subjective evidence, and are willing to put aside their skepticism when the evidence supports the hypothesis. Winston is an open-minded skeptic,

as I am, and as most normal people and scientists are too.

But there is also a class of skeptics that Winston calls pseudo-skeptics who will never accept *any* evidence for the paranormal, no matter how objective, and no matter how repeatable it is. They are relatively few in number, but they do make a lot of noise and their role has been to aggressively and willfully misdirect, mislead and confuse the public about legitimate unconventional research in areas such as the paranormal. Winston makes the point that these pseudo-skeptics' minds generalize other things as well: conspiracies are never investigated by them; miraculous healings attested to by physicians are never investigated.

Those who have studied Winston's work in the past know already how meticulous he has been in dealing with every objection the pseudo-skeptics make. His approach is extremely logical, thorough and compatible with courtroom science. Whilst the pseudo-skeptics will never allow their unsupported subjective beliefs to be subjected to litigation type cross-examination, Winston Wu's arguments would pass all legitimate tests.

Those of us interested in unconventional phenomena and the paranormal – i.e. paranormal investigators, afterlife empirical-investigators, mediums, psychics, those who use their services and others – will find this book invaluable. It provides irrefutable arguments that can be used to counter unfair attacks by the ill-informed and the debunker, and shows that unconventional knowledge and the paranormal do have a legitimate place in our lives.

Sincerely,
Victor Zammit
Retired Attorney and Author of *A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife*

http://www.victorzammit.com

Note: To obtain a PDF version of this book with clickable links, contact me at http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/contact.php (Available only to purchasers of this book)

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“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

Introduction

Dear Reader,

Greetings. My name is Winston Wu. I am a researcher and explorer of the paranormal, psychic phenomena, metaphysics, quantum physics, consciousness research, realms of higher consciousness, and religion/philosophy. This book rebuts and critiques the most common arguments made by pseudoskeptics (those who claim to be skeptics but in fact are cynics, debunkers, scoffers) regarding paranormal and psychic phenomena, showing the flaws and fallacies in their thinking, philosophy and methodology. I've listed their common arguments one-by-one and pointed out the fallacies, flaws and problems in them based on years of experience in debating with them.

The Paranormal is one of the most exciting frontiers today. Research into Consciousness, Quantum Physics and Psychic Phenomena, etc. explores venues that are unlocking the mysteries of the universe and gateways to other dimensions or levels of reality and consciousness. These provide deeper insights into a larger nature of reality, revealing insights into the meaning of existence and spawning hope for a better future in which humanity's consciousness and awareness are elevated to new heights, transcending greed, lust for power, hatred, violence, ignorance, and the confines of a materialistic paradigm that keeps us living in fear. Therefore, the study of the Paranormal is a key stepping stone for humanity's next stage of evolution.

However, standing in the way are groups of organized fundamentalists who call themselves "skeptics" but in reality are dogmatic defenders of establishment and materialistic reductionistic science who reject and deny anything which challenges that. They are pseudoskeptics cause their actions and behaviors are the antithesis to what the word skepticism really means. (More on that later)

The pseudoskepticism movement includes organizations such as CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), now known as CSI (Committee for Skeptical Inquiry), JREF (James Randi Educational Foundation) and professional Skeptics such as Michael Shermer of Skeptic Magazine, as well as many smaller groups and websites. In media reports and programs on paranormal

phenomena, these skeptics are often presented as the final authorities on the matter and go virtually unchallenged. And *unfortunately, most paranormal/psychic researchers have neither the time nor interest to debate these debunkers.*

And that's where we come in. This book's objective is to expose and debunk the fallacies, flaws and misinformation of the pseudoskepticism movement.

Now it's our turn to form a counter movement and coalition. Enter **SCEPCOP – The Scientific Committee to Evaluate PseudoSkeptical Criticism of the Paranormal**. As CSICOP was formed to "police the claims of psi", SCEPCOP now in turn acts to "police the cynicism of pseudoskeptics". We will debunk their arguments, and reveal their fallacies, misinformation, censorship, denial, inconsistencies, pseudo-dogmas posing as "rules of logic" and double standards, showing that they are not objective truth seekers, but biased debunkers.

Just to state for the record though, opposing pseudoskepticism does NOT mean that SCEPCOP endorses every crackpot claim, theory and fantasy out there. Not at all. We believe in applying equal skepticism to both sides, as well as the objective weighing of evidence, for as you might expect, some claims and phenomenon have a lot of solid evidence to back it up, while others have little or none.

First though, let me tell you how I came to write this book.

How this book came to be written

Possessing a vivid imagination and the ability to think outside the box, I've always been unimpressed with mundane ordinary life and materialistic values. Thus I've always aspired to reach higher, for deeper meaning and understanding, and the bigger picture. Thus I've always had an interest in esoteric things, and been drawn to spirituality, religion, and the search for meaning. I started out during childhood as an Evangelical Christian fundamentalist, which gave me the structure and solid sense of purpose that I needed at the time. When I turned 19, I felt that the absolutist doctrines of my faith were too limiting and narrow minded for me, and not allowing me to learn anything new without fear. This began a

slow de-conversion process which led me to become Agnostic for a while. You can read my story about my deconversion on DebunkingSkeptics.com entitled *My Rise to Christianity and Transcendence From It*. (I also have another book in similar form to this one debunking and refuting main Christian arguments entitled *Debunking Christian Circular Arguments and Assumptions)*

Since then, I have always been a critical opponent of brainwashing tactics, after having been brainwashed myself a number of times, but learning from it each time. As a result, I've written various debunking articles, which you will also find at DebunkingSkeptics.com).

After my Christian deconversion, I found that the Atheist paradigm didn't have the answers to life's mysteries or even to unexplained phenomena either. I knew that its paradigm was insufficient as well. Neither Atheism nor Evangelical Christianity seemed adequate, but oddly enough many people seem to think that those are the only two belief systems to choose from. Realizing that there were way too many things that couldn't be explained by conventional or scientific explanations, I started looking for answers in non-organized forms of spirituality. After further research and questioning, I discovered many fascinating things and new paradigms that fit the unexplained data, which gave me a more comprehensive view of reality and spirituality. I discovered that there was indeed powerful evidence (some of which is irrefutable) that some paranormal phenomena are genuine and *do* have a basis, both scientifically and in terms of anecdotal evidence.

To try to gain an understanding of the other side of the issue, (which is what you should do when you want to learn something in depth) I went to skeptics to ask what they had to say and also read some of their literature. I found that what they had to say made sense on the surface, but was very different than what I heard from the literature about paranormal phenomena, accounts of paranormal experiences from ordinary people (some of which I know and trust), and my own experiences. In order to try to make sense of such different but arguable views, I tried to sift through the details and the evidence. What I found was that although both skeptics and believers can be closed-minded and tend to rationalize away what they don't want to believe, in either case the objective evidence for some of the paranormal was incredibly strong and undeniable.

As I became more educated and informed of the evidence for different types of paranormal phenomena, I presented this to skeptics both on message boards and internet newsgroups. What resulted was an endless charade of arguments on both sides, with each side bringing up facts that support their side while denying the facts of the other side. This is typical of debates in general, no doubt, but since there were so many types of paranormal phenomena, the topic range was broad and diverse enough to make continuous and interesting discussions. Consequently, the discussions dragged on much longer than expected. Not only were there so many topics to discuss, but I kept finding more and more quality evidence to support my view each time I looked. All this became a fascinating exercise in the quest for truth.

During the discussions and debates, I was led to skeptical material such as Professor Bob Carroll's *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, editions of *Skeptical Inquirer* (published by CSICOP), articles by the infamous paranormal debunker James Randi, and others. Over time, I developed a strong recognition and grasp of their system of philosophical arguments and sensed the patterns in them. After hearing almost all the arguments they used, I learned how to respond to them to the point of it being second nature to me. I knew their strengths and weaknesses, just as an experienced chess player understood the strengths and weaknesses of the positions of his opponent's pieces. For almost three years, I debated skeptics ranging from honest doubters looking for truth (like me), to those who were clearly cynics masquerading as skeptics having already made up their minds before looking at the evidence.

These skeptics included cynics, debunkers, Atheists, Humanists, certain scientists bent on materialistic reductionist world views, those for whom science is their God (even though they won't admit it), scientific materialists, haters of religion, etc. Now we call them "pseudoskeptics" because although they pose as skeptics, their skepticism is "pseudo" meaning "False or counterfeit; fake." (American Heritage Dictionary) Hence the title of this book.

Eventually, I realized that their skepticism was not about an open inquiry for truth, but rather a *philosophy* they used to manipulate data to fit their beliefs and reject anything outside of it on purely subjective grounds. This philosophy was pseudo-intellectual in nature

and used to discredit and invalidate both claimants and evidence. Oddly, these skeptics seem to think that they can use semantics and rules from this philosophy to erase evidence from reality! They think that they can invalidate real-life objective events and evidence of a paranormal nature by putting labels on them or quoting some theorem or axiom such as "*anecdotal evidence is invalid", "appeal to authority", "ad populum fallacy argument"* etc. In effect, they attempt to use semantics to erase objective reality. Unfortunately for them, reality doesn't work that way.

It was obvious that these skeptics were not seeking the truth nor were they open to it. Instead, they were about systematically trying to debunk everything that didn't fit in with their *a priori* staunch materialistic views. Therefore, they did not ask questions of an exploratory nature, but rather, they taunted and attacked believers and made claims and judgments about their paranormal experiences. They had already made up their minds beforehand, and would only accept evidence that fit their conclusions. A true skeptic and truth-seeker analyzes both sides and updates his views and opinions to conform with the facts, while a pseudoskeptic on the other hand manipulates the facts to fit into their beliefs, using selective attention as well.

Then I suddenly realized at the time that no books or in-depth analyses have been written to directly counter the arguments and philosophy of organized skeptics and debunkers. There were a few articles written about closed-minded skeptics in general, but no in-depth point by point critique or debunking of their arguments. For almost every other organized belief system, there are books written analyzing its precepts and doctrines, but not for organized skepticism. Therefore, I decided to be the first to write such a thing, making use of the knowledge I gained over the years and my debating skills. I felt that being the first in something was an accomplishment that I would be inspired to do. And that's how this book came to be written back in 2001.

When it was first released, it became widely acclaimed in the paranormal community as groundbreaking, effective and the first of its kind. It led to my appearance on several radio shows such as *Forbidden Truth* by my friend Michael Goodspeed, *The Clyde Lewis Show* (KOTK 1080 AM) in Portland, Oregon, and *Ghostly Talk Radio* (you can listen to that interview in the archive section of their website at www.ghostlytalk.com or on my YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/scepcop). Later, due to

widespread recognition, I was invited to an international conference as a guest speaker at the *Mysteries of the World* theme park in Switzerland, and to a public debate with skeptics in New York.

Of course, not surprisingly the skeptics later issued a piece to debunk this book. A skeptic named Paul Sandoval published his counter-piece to it, which you can download at: http://www.skepticreport.com/skepticism/winstonwu.htm As you can see from it, he simply does more of the same, twisting words into "logical fallacies", which anyone can do to anyone they disagree with, putting labels on things, and twisting semantics to his advantage, none of which disproves any of the facts, examples and evidence I cited, nor erases evidence for paranormal phenomena from existence. People who do this are "in their own world", so to speak. (To see a great example of word games from pseudoskeptics that have nothing to do with reality, see my online exchange with one at http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/skeptic_word_games.htm in which he was proven to have lied several times beyond any shadow of doubt.)

Years later in 2009, I formed a coalition and website called **SCEPCOP – Scientific Committee to Evaluate Pseudoskeptical Criticism of the Paranormal**, which was the world's first organized counter-skeptic group created to counter CSICOP, JREF, etc. Although at this time SCEPCOP is in its infancy, its popularity has soared among the Paranormal community and received attention from the Skeptic camp as well. In August of 2009, the paranormal magazine *Atlantis Rising* did an article on SCEPCOP in issue 77.

With the exception of sensational pro-paranormal programs, skeptics are often given the chance to present their arguments and explanations in the media, national magazines, and television programs, without rebuttal from the other side, even when their explanations are insufficient to explain all the data. As a result, there is often an imbalance in the presentation of paranormal and psychic phenomena in the media, leaving most viewers and believers uninformed. This book attempts to counteract the imbalance. It is written both for the education and knowledge of the believer who deals with skeptics, and for skeptics who are willing to hear counter-arguments to their positions.

Now let me clarify that I have nothing against honest true skepticism. It is good to have a healthy dose of skepticism to protect one from scams, con artists, misleading advertising, misleading claims, propaganda, brainwashing, jumping to conclusions, etc. But when closed-minded cynicism comes masquerading as skepticism, it becomes a block to truth finding and open-minded investigation. However, those new to this subject may not be able to discern the difference between open honest skepticism and closed-minded pseudoskepticism. Therefore, let us differentiate between the two.

Defining PseudoSkeptics vs. True Skeptics: Behaviors and Tactics

According to *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, a skeptic is:

> "One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic
> "In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than *inquiring*, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than *suspending judgment*, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. **They are PROSECUTORS, not investigators.** Hence, we call them ***pseudoskeptics*** (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete *antithesis* of what skepticism truly means.

According to WikiSynergy.com:

> **Pseudoskepticism** (or *pseudoskepticism*) is defined as *thinking that claims to be Skeptical but is actually faith-based disbelief*. Because real skepticism is a justifiable position, pseudoskepticism may also be defined as *making pseudoscientific arguments in pursuit of a skeptical agenda.*
>
> ***Pseudoskepticism*** is a general term which encompasses two types of faith-based disbelief: making *positive claims* that something is wrong or unreal without evidence (positive ***dis***belief), and rejecting sufficient evidence.

A "true skeptic" objectively inquires and seeks evidence, challenging all sides including their own beliefs. But these pseudoskeptics do anything but. As someone observed to me:

> "The original definition of skeptic was a person who questions ALL beliefs, facts, and points-of-view. A healthy perspective in my opinion. Today's common definition of skeptic is someone who questions any belief that strays outside of the status quo, yet leaving the status quo itself completely unquestioned. Kind of a juvenile and intellectually lazy practice in my opinion."

Even Wikipedia indirectly admits that modern skepticism is really about rejecting new information:

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic
> “The word skepticism can characterize a position on a single claim, but in scholastic circles more frequently describes a lasting mind-set and an approach to accepting or rejecting new information.”

And this insightful YouTuber eloquently hit the bull's eye with this comment:

> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vks49Bfn544
> "What skeptics fail to understand is that skepticism involves being skeptical of your own position, it does not mean just being skeptical of that which you do not believe in, otherwise we are all skeptics and that renders their use of the term "skeptic" meaningless. A true skeptic casts skepticism on their own position as well. Since the

> Randi crowd do not employ skepticism in this respect then they are fairly termed pseudo skeptics and demean the term skepticism."

So, pseudoskeptics have hijacked the term "skeptic" to refer to the one who *suppresses,* rather than the one who "doubts or questions" which it is supposed to refer to. As such, a "skeptic" now refers to the ridiculer, debunker and discreditor of the "questioner" (who is the true skeptic) rather than to the questioner himself. **In other words, the new "skeptic" is someone who debunks a "skeptic" by wearing the hat of the person they are out to debunk, in effect impersonating them!** It's a highly deceptive form of role reversal that is very sneaky and devious, no doubt.

And furthermore, it seems way too calculated and militant to be due to some accidental misunderstanding, ignorance or closed mindedness. Hijacking a word to mean its opposite seems more like part of some sort of agenda, perhaps a **deliberate disinformation campaign or cultural mind control**. If that sounds terrible, well, we are here to expose that thank goodness.

In truth and by their actions, **these pseudoskeptics are defenders of the status quo and materialism. They are fanatics and dogmatists who have no regard for facts, evidence or truth, but have an a priori faith-based belief that paranormal phenomena is impossible and therefore set out to debunk it, not investigate it.** And they will distort, dismiss and obfuscate to get their way. Thus, they generally have no objectivity toward evidence, but bigotry and emotional fanaticism.

If you're wondering if this is true, then ask yourself this: Why do those who attack, ridicule and deny all paranormal claims also usually deny *all* conspiracies and facts in support of them, while dogmatically accepting all propaganda by the media and establishment? Have you ever seen a paranormal debunker like James Randi, Michael Shermer or CSICOP's *Skeptical Inquirer* challenge anything official held by the status quo at all, period? If not, what does that tell you? Think about it.

And that's what a "skeptic" is today in the media and pop culture. Obviously this means that their skepticism is *highly selective and subjective*, not distributed equally in all directions, hence an *extreme bias* exists in them rather than any form of objectivity. Skepticism should be a

tool and method of inquiry to help one learn things and find truth, not be used as a cover to defend one's own rigid narrow views. Questioning things and seeking answers helps one learn things, but trying to debunk everything outside your world view doesn't.

Dean Radin, who spent many years studying parapsychology and skeptical views, concluded the same in his acclaimed book *Entangled Minds*: (pages 10-11)

> "Some skeptics pushed doubt to extremes and insisted that positive evidence was always due to mistakes or intentional fraud. As I saw it, within this dialectic one side was struggling to understand the depths of inner space by probing Nature with clever questions. The other was trying to maintain the status quo through passionate, and sometimes vicious, denial. The former were willing to take risks to advance knowledge, the latter were naysayers interested mainly in defending dogma."

Chris Carter, author of *Parapsychology and the Skeptics*, accurately described the pseudoskeptics' true motivations in this interview:

> http://www.skeptiko.com/blog/?p=8
> "You have to remember that the argument is not really about the evidence. The argument is about their assumptions and their preconceptions. Their preconceptions are, with these sort of phenomena, that they don't make any sense and challenge their world view. So, they're going to do anything they possibly can to dismiss evidence that challenges their preconceptions."

The late great author Robert Anton Wilson observed the same regarding pseudoskeptics, calling them "fundamentalist materialists" and "irrational rationalists" in this interview:

> http://www.nii.net/~obie/1988_interview.htm
>
> "DAB: One of your recent books is **The New Inquisition: Irrational Rationalism and the Citadel of Science**. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about this book.

RAW: I coined the term irrational rationalism because those people claim to be rationalists, but they're governed by such a heavy body of taboos. They're so fearful, and so hostile, and so narrow, and frightened, and uptight and dogmatic. I thought it was a fascinating paradox: irrational rationalists. Later on I found out I didn't invent that. Somebody else who wrote an article on CSICOP, that's the group they all belong to: Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Somebody else who wrote about them also used the term irrational rationalism. It's a hard term to resist when you think about those people.

I wrote this book because I got tired satirizing fundamentalist Christianity, I had done enough of that in my other books. I decided to satirize fundamentalist materialism for a change, because the two are equally comical. All fundamentalism is comical, unless you believe in it, in which case you'd become a fanatic yourself, and want everybody else to share your fundamentalism. But if you're not a fundamentalist yourself, fundamentalists are the funniest people on the planet. The materialist fundamentalists are funnier than the Christian fundamentalists, because they think they're rational!

DAB: They call themselves skeptical.

RAW: Yes, but they're not skeptical! They're never skeptical about anything except the things they have a prejudice against. None of them ever says anything skeptical about the AMA, or about anything in establishment science or any entrenched dogma. They're only skeptical about new ideas that frighten them. They're actually dogmatically committed to what they were taught when they were in college, which was about 1948-53, somewhere in that period. If you go back and study what was being taught in college in those days as the latest scientific theories, you find out that's what these people still believe. They haven't had a new idea in 30 years, that's all that happened to them. They just rigidified, they crystallized around 1960."

As Wilson stated, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalists on the opposite extreme end of Christian fundamentalism in terms of their black and white thinking. Here is an example that demonstrates this. A popular book among skeptics is Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World:*

Science As a Candle in the Dark. The mere title of the book and its cover (which you can see by clicking the link to it) demonstrates this analogy. The world is seen as “demon haunted” just as in Christianity, with the majority of people living in the “dark”, believing in superstition and religion, but ignorant of science. While, on the other hand, those who rely on science and are skeptics are the “candle in the dark” or the “light of the world” in Christian Gospel terms. This is the same kind of black and white thinking that puts everyone into two categories, in the light and in the dark, that Christian fundamentalists use as well. In my opinion, it’s unhealthy thinking to have belief systems like that.

It is interesting to note that while Carl Sagan is a great teacher of astronomy and science, he has inadequate knowledge and experience with paranormal phenomena. This is demonstrated by the fact that in his book *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark* Sagan devotes a big chapter to debunking the Alien Abduction phenomenon, yet not once does he even personally investigate or interview any abductees at all, like an honest open-minded investigator or truth seeker would. On the other hand, researchers like Harvard Professor John Mack (author of *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*) and Budd Hopkins (author of *Missing Time*) have done extensive interviews and investigations with abductees for their book, which led them to the conclusion that there was more to the phenomenon than just the “all in the brain” or sleep paralysis. In fact, Mack has personally investigated 76 abductee cases during the course of four years. But how many did Sagan investigate? Zero. Therefore, one ought to give those researchers more credence than skeptics like Sagan who just dismiss the subject off-hand without any deep investigation for truth.

Of course, all pseudoskeptics will *claim to be true skeptics*, just like all high pressured salesmen claim to not be high pressure, all liars and con artists claim to be sincere, and all politicians claim to be honest. But as you know, **ACTIONS speak louder than words**, so the proof of what they are is in their ACTIONS, not words. If a salesman for example, told you "I am not a high pressure salesman" but then proceeds to pressure you to buy his product/service, hounding you without end and not taking no for an answer, then what do you believe, his words or his actions? Likewise, when a self described skeptic tells you that he is a true skeptic who is open to evidence, yet he displays all the characteristics, traits and

behaviors of a pseudoskeptic, then do you listen to his words or his actions? The answer is obvious.

Thus, regardless of what they claim about themselves, if they exhibit the follow traits and characteristics, then they fall into the category of "pseudoskeptics".

1) Ignoring facts and evidence that don't fit into their preconceived world view, rather than updating their beliefs to conform to the facts, which is more logical. (e.g. "It can't be, therefore it isn't!") This is known as the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance.

2) Trying to force materialistic explanations, even if they're false, to account for a paranormal event regardless of whether they fit the data. For example, using "cold reading" to explain the amazing accuracy of a psychic reading when no known cold reading technique could account for the facts and circumstances. (see Argument # 16)

3) Moving the goal posts or raising the bar whenever their criteria for evidence is met. For example, a skeptic wants evidence for psi in the form of controlled experiments rather than anecdotal evidence. When this evidence is presented, he will then raise the bar and demand that the experiments be repeatable by other researchers. When this is done, then he will either attack the researchers integrity and character, attack their methods, or demand a report of every detail and minute of the experiment or else he will contend that some unmentioned lack of controls must have been the culprit to explain the positive psi results, etc. He will always find some excuse due to his already made-up mindset. Patrick Huyghe has written an article about this at http://www.anomalist.com/commentaries/claim.html

4) Using double standards in what they will accept as evidence. They will not accept anecdotal evidence for the paranormal because they consider it to be unreliable, but not surprisingly they will accept anecdotal evidence when it supports *their* position. Also, when psi experiments shows positive results well above, they will not accept it as evidence against psi. But when a psi experiment only shows chance results, they will accept that as evidence against psi.

5) Attacking the character of witnesses and undermining their credibility their evidence or testimonies can't be explained away. As we all know, when politicians can't win on the issues, they resort to character assassinations. Unfortunately, this is also what skeptics and debunkers tend to do as well. When evidence or testimony from key people can't be explained away or are irrefutable, skeptics will find ways to discredit them such as character assassinations or grossly exaggerating and distorting trivial mistakes. This has especially been done with the direct eyewitnesses of the 1947 Roswell Incident, as Stanton Friedman, author of *Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a UFO* often points out in his articles you can read at www.v-j-enterprises.com/sfhome.html.

6) Dismissing all evidence for the paranormal by classifying it either as anecdotal, untestable, unreplicable, or uncontrolled. Skeptics who wish to close their minds to any evidence, even after asking for it ironically, tend to do so by classifying it into one of the categories above. If the evidence is anecdotal, they will say that anecdotal evidence is worthless scientifically and untestable. If the evidence is in the form of scientific experiments, they will then say that it is unreplicable or uncontrolled.

Here are a list of traits that define the true skeptic vs. the pseudoskeptic.

<u>True Skeptics / Open-Minded Skeptics</u>

- Questions everything and takes nothing on faith, even from cherished established institutions.
- Asks questions to try to understand new things and are open to learning about them.
- Applies critical examination and inquiry to all sides, including their own.
- Withholds judgment and does not jump to rash conclusions.
- Seeks the truth and considers it the highest aim.
- Thinks in terms of possibilities rather than in preserving fixed views.
- Fairly and objectively weighs evidence on all sides.
- Acknowledges valid convincing evidence rather than ignoring or denying it.
- Possess solid sharp common sense and reason.

- Are able to adapt their paradigms to new evidence and update their hypothesis to fit the data.
- When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are able to accept paranormal ones.
- Accepts that there are mysteries and revels in trying to understand them.
- Views science as a tool and methodology, not as a religion or authority to be obeyed. Understands the difference between the scientific process and the scientific establishment.
- Acknowledges that the scientific establishment is subject to politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression, as all human based institutions are - and therefore must be critically examined and scrutinized, rather than taken on faith, especially in the light of contrary evidence to their claims.
- Will admit they are wrong when the evidence calls for it.

<u>PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics</u>

- Does not question anything from established non-religious institutions, but takes whatever they say on faith and demands that others do the same.
- Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into orthodoxy.
- Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes orthodoxy or materialism, but never to the status quo itself.
- Immediately judges as false and debunks anything that contradicts their paradigm.
- Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending their views.
- Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but sees their paradigms as fixed and constant.
- Are willing to lie and deceive to discredit their opponents.
- Automatically dismisses and denies all data that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy.
- Are judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing about.
- Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective analysis and examination.

- When faced with evidence or facts they can't refute, uses semantics, word games and denial to try to obfuscate the issue.
- Unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence, and denies data which doesn't fit into them.
- When all conventional explanations for an unexplainable phenomenon are ruled out, are still not able to accept paranormal ones.
- Dislikes mystery and uncertainty, and insist that all unknown phenomena must have a mundane explanation.
- Views the scientific establishment as a religion and authority to be taken on faith and never questioned or challenged. Does not understand the difference between the scientific process/methodology and the scientific establishment institution.
- Assumes that the scientific establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression for no other reason than blind faith in authority.
- Will never admit that they are wrong no matter what, regardless of evidence.

Wikipedia's original entry on *pathological skepticism* (before pseudoskeptics took it down) listed these defining behaviors of pseudoskeptics:

> "The difference between pseudoskepticism and skepticism appear in the conduct of an individual's actions. Among the indications of pseudoskeptical actions are:

1. Resorting to various logical fallacies (usually in an attack against those disputing a theory).
2. The assumption of facts (such as, stating theories determine phenomena).
3. The obfuscation of facts.
4. The use of attractive or neutral euphemisms to disguise unpleasant facts concerning their own positions.
5. Insisting that fundamental framework and theory of science hardly change.
6. Unwavering belief that science is a consensus and run on majority rule.
7. Maintaining a stance of hostility and intolerance.

8. Instituting hurdles against new theories by "moving the goalposts".
9. Ignoring intellectual suppression of unorthodox theories.
10. Judging a theory or phenomena without investigation and insisting on ignoring the details thereafter."

In the SCEPCOP Forum, Steve Trueblue observed these five consistent patterns in pseudoskeptics:

"As a skilled observer you will also note that PseudoSkeptics:

1. Seldom, in fact almost never, ask questions, reflecting Zero Curiosity thus learning difficulties
2. Practice a very high level of self deception and mistakenly believe they can lie to adults as they did in childhood
3. Display markedly deficient reading and comprehension skills
4. Display inability to connect thoughts sequentially and plan an argument- often defeating their own case
5. Depend on bluster and bullying and name calling to make up for lack of argument content"

In short, these pseudoskeptics are **materialist fundamentalists** driven by **fanatical beliefs and views** which they seek to proselytize to the world. Regardless of facts or evidence, they ALWAYS start and end with the following dogmatic positions:

- Paranormal claims are all bunk and cannot be true. There is no evidence for them.
- Conspiracies are all false. There is no evidence for them. Official sources are not to be questioned.
- Anything that challenges the status quo and materialism is wrong and must be debunked.
- Only natural materialistic explanations are acceptable. Paranormal ones are not.

They begin with those precepts and always come back to them, regardless of the facts or evidence in any investigation or debate, EVERYTIME. That's one consistent thing you will notice about them. And they will resort to playing games, ridicule, denial, even deliberate distortion, fabrication and connecting false dots to maintain these core

positions. That's why they are not really capable of serious honest discussion. Instead, they play games and cheat at them in order to win. I've seen them do it time and time again. It doesn't matter how much proof or evidence you have. All of that is irrelevant to them. They seek only to validate their beliefs, not change their beliefs in accord with the facts or data.

They will never admit that they've lost, even though technically they have. When cornered by facts and reason, they resort to denial or ad hominem attacks. Or they even will spin your own arguments against you, without basis. It's like winning a chess game against an opponent, and even though the rules say they are checkmated, they still refuse to admit defeat. That's not fair, honest, or decent behavior.

For more on pseudoskeptical tactics, see
http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Links.htm

The late Marcello Truzzi, former member of CSICOP and critic of pseudoskepticism, wrote an article about pseudoskeptics which you can read about at http://www.anomalist.com/commentaries/pseudo.html

One of the tell-tale signs of pseudoskeptical mentality is in the words they use when describing believers. If they describe them as: *"delusional, irrational, gullible, charlatans, superstitious, wishful-thinking, primitive and child-like thinking",* etc. then it's a strong indication of their *a priori* mentality.

PseudoSkeptics like the CSICOP and JREF crowd are definitely not open minded truth seekers, but rather their words and behavior are that of automatic dismissing and denying that which doesn't fit into their paradigm. They are cynics who have closed their mind to anything that doesn't fit into their world view, dismissing all else as misperception, delusion, or fraud. But don't take my word for it, for if you read their own writing and hear what they say, it's obvious from their own words and behavior, and from their tunnel-view of reality, as well as their righteous indignation of what's real and what's "quackery" (a word they love to use). They do not seek to understand, but to attack and discredit.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the term "pseudo" means "False or counterfeit; fake." These debunkers exhibit a false mask of

skepticism. In actuality, they are cynics, debunkers, and deniers. They deny and dismiss all evidence that doesn't fit their views, whether scientific or anecdotal, no matter how credible or plentiful, and look for excuses to justify it. They are not about seeking truth or open-minded investigation, only in discrediting whatever doesn't fit into the orthodoxy/materialist paradigm.

Unfortunately, pseudoskeptic groups have not heeded the warnings and advice of one of their own heroes, the late Carl Sagan:

> "...The chief deficiency I see in the skeptical movement is its polarization: Us vs. Them -- the sense that we have a monopoly on the truth; that those other people who believe in all these stupid doctrines are morons; that if you're sensible, you'll listen to us; and if not, to hell with you. This is nonconstructive. It does not get our message across. It condemns us to permanent minority status." - Carl Sagan
>
> "People are not stupid. They believe things for reasons. The last way for skeptics to get the attention of bright, curious, intelligent people is to belittle or condescend or to show arrogance toward their beliefs." - Carl Sagan
>
> "The suppression of uncomfortable ideas may be common in religion or in politics, but it is not the path to knowledge, and there's no place for it in the endeavor of science." - Carl Sagan

These illogical ways of thinking are strange coming from people who pride themselves on their logic and rationality! Of course, flawed thinking such as the above can come from both believers and skeptics. That is why it is good to point them out to keep both sides in check.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, describes how these debunkers reject what doesn't fit into their world view through the process of *rationalization through cognitive dissonance*:

> http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html
>
> "Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife -- which is

fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity.“

Dr. Zammit also hit it on the head about how pseudoskeptics overgeneralize and distort information:

http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html

“Skeptics can be seen to *overgeneralize* saying for instance that because some mediums are fraudulent therefore all mediums are fraudulent.

Further, skeptics *distort* information saying that because it *may* be possible to reproduce certain phenomena by fraud - even at odds of one billion to one - that they have proven that fraud took place. In this sense, the skeptics find it impossible to transcend their *'metaprogram'* (their overriding world view of reality) of materialistic beliefs.”

As to why pseudoskeptics believe what they do, this author, who spent time undercover in a skeptical organization, might be able to shed some light on that:

http://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_16_1_leiter.pdf

"A person who has been duped frequently in everyday life might learn by bitter experience to be cautious and wary. The reaction of those who have joined PhACT is however more dysfunctional. They have been wounded at a deeper level, to the extent that what was purported to be a valid philosophy of life, and in which they were heavily involved, turns out to be empty and useless, even damaging, in their eyes. Thus, they gravitate to what appears to them to be the ultimate non-faith-based philosophy, Science. Unfortunately, while they loudly proclaim their righteousness, based on their professed adherence to “hard science”, they do so with the one thing no true scientist can afford to possess, a closed mind. Instead of becoming scientifically minded, they become adherents of scientism, the belief system in which science and only science has all the answers to everything.

This regrettable condition acts to preclude their unbiased consideration of phenomena on the cutting edge of science, which is not how a true scientist should behave. In fact, many “Skeptics” will not even read significantly into the literature on the subjects about which they are most skeptical. I have direct experience with this specific behavior on the part of a number of PhACT members. Initially, I attributed that behavior to just plain laziness, but lately I’ve begun to suspect that those individuals may actually have a phobia about reading material that is contrary to their own views. It seems entirely possible that they fear “contamination” from that exposure will eventually lead to (Gasp!) acceptance of the opposition’s position. Such scientifically inclined, but psychologically scarred people tend to join Skeptics’ organizations much as one might join any other support group, say, Alcoholics Anonymous. There they find comfort, consolation, and support amongst their own kind.

Anyone who has spent much time engaging members of Skeptics’ organizations knows about their strong inclination toward ridicule and ad hominem criticism of those with differing viewpoints. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many members of PhACT have been rather offended by my position as someone who is skeptical of Skeptics. As the old adage states, “They can dish it out, but they can’t take it.”

In school, you are taught that "critical thinking" means to refute and ridicule anything that opposes the establishment or status quo, but never the status quo itself. A true skeptic can rise above that and apply skepticism and critical thought toward established orthodoxy, but a pseudoskeptic cannot. Instead, the pseudoskeptic follows the school system's form of "critical thinking", applying it only to those who oppose orthodoxy in defense of the status quo.

In that sense, they are in reality "establishment defenders" rather than true skeptics. That is why they NEVER challenge, criticize or scrutinize their government or any part of the establishment, including the pharmaceutical companies, CIA or FBI, even if logic, facts, evidence or moral cause dictates that they should.

To these establishment defenders, **authority = truth**, and as such is always blameless in their eyes. That is their religion, so hence, all their skills, talents and knowledge are used to serve their true God - orthodoxy. In their view, establishment authority can do no wrong, even if they murder, traffic drugs, steal, lie, stage terrorist attacks, start wars by funding both sides, etc.

What this means is that these pseudoskeptics do not serve truth as their master. As such, they are willing to lie and deceive to serve their masters (there are so many documented cases of this). Thus they are not "free" in any sense of the word, nor honest, which is sad.

This is why not only are they closed minded against anything to do with paranormal phenomena, but are vehemently opposed to all claims of government conspiracies as well, no matter how well supported, for it offends their "true master" (which is not truth).

Examples of famous pseudoskeptics and establishment defenders: (Check them all out and you will see that their actions fit the above description)

- James Randi and his JREF crowd
- Michael Shermer
- CSICOP and their crowd

- Penn and Teller and their "Bullshit" show (pun intended) which is an insult to one's intelligence
- The Mythbusters
- Phil Plait and his "Bad Astronomy" folks

Scientism – The Religion of Pseudoskeptics

Now let me clarify something. Critics of pseudoskeptics have accused them of believing in *Scientism* – the belief that science is to be treated as an authority with all the answers and taken on faith, just like a religion is. In response, pseudoskeptics claim that science is a process of independent peer review and replication and therefore not a religion.

So then, is science a religion, you might ask? Well, yes and no. Technically, science is not a religion. It is a tool and methodology of obtaining logical conclusions through evidence and inquiry. As such, it is not an entity that holds positions or viewpoints, like people do. Therefore, science is not pro or anti-paranormal, anymore than a pencil, computer program or mathematical formula is.

However, the scientific establishment is another matter, because it involves people, politics, power, money, institutions and vested interests. And as such, politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression are naturally a part of it. Realists know and understand this. But for some reason pseudoskeptics don't.

The key fallacy that pseudoskeptics make is lumping the scientific process and the scientific establishment into one, and assuming that they are one and the same. That is the major fallacy of the organized skepticism movement, which consists of the JREF, CSICOP and Michael Shermer type crowd.

In doing so, they falsely assume that the science and medical establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression. That's where their major mistake is. And as such, they deem the science and medical establishment as an unassailable authority that is not to be questioned or challenged. In that sense, they treat science as a religion. So even though they claim that

science is not a religion, they still treat it as such, by holding the views of the science establishment as an unquestionable authority.

So, if researchers such as Dean Radin, Rupert Sheldrake or Dr. Gary Schwartz come up with evidence for psychic phenomena, it is automatically dismissed as invalid, simply because it challenges the orthodoxy of the science establishment, not because the experiments were not legit. And they will use any excuse to do so, including the lamest ones.

Likewise, when evidence comes up that vaccines, fluoride, aspartme or mercury dental fillings are dangerous and harmful, that evidence is suppressed and deemed inadmissible, simply because it threatens the medical establishment and its vested interests, not because the evidence is untrue.

By filtering out such contrary evidence, even when it is legit and valid, pseudoskeptics definitely are treating the science and medical establishment as a religion. And as we all know, religion is authority and faith based, not evidence based.

You see, no one likes to invest a lot of time and money into something, only to have it proven wrong or changed. And the science/medical establishment is no exception. They are people with political interests, not objective unbiased machines. So let's get real here.

You don't have to be educated to understand this. Anyone with common sense, street smarts, and real life experience knows this. But pseudoskeptics, in their fanaticism, ignore such common sense realities. They are fanatics, not realists.

Furthermore, organized skeptics like to tout "science" as a peer reviewed process of independent replication, and therefore totally reliable. In doing so, they treat it like a "democratic process" in which the majority of scientists decide what's true by agreeing on it. **This is another fallacy, because it assumes that most scientists are objective and unbiased, and free to say whatever they want without consequence.**

But this is not the way the real world of money, power and politics works. Any realist knows that when you work for an institution or receive funding,

you have to “tow the party line”, or else you are out. It’s that simple. Any scientist who says something that opposes the views of those he works for, will jeopardize his career and reputation. There are many real life examples of scientists and researchers who have lost funding or suffered damage to their career for espousing unorthodox positions, even if their position was legit and evidence-based.

Moreover, most people are not unbiased, open minded, or hold truth as the highest value. Instead, they are concerned with their image, reputation, career, funding, and hold rigid views that they feel safe and comfortable in. Many people do not like uncertainty or mystery. They want a world where things make sense and are predictable and well-defined. That’s why they are prone to fall into rigid unchanging belief systems. Why would scientists be any different. They may be more educated than the average person, sure, but they are humans, and humans have biases.

It is the truth seeker and freethinker who questions everything and does not hold any authority as truth, who is most likely to find the truth. Not the most educated or well connected with institutions.

Pseudoskeptics ignore all this, or are blind to it, because they are fanatics, not truth seekers or freethinkers. When you look at the overall picture, this becomes obvious.

Thus, the key difference in this area between the pseudoskeptic and the truth seeker/freethinker, is that the former holds the science/medical establishment as a religion of unquestionable authority, whereas the latter does not, and recognizes it for what it is – an institution with vested interests, politics, power, money, control and censorship that is not above suppressing that which threatens it.

Anyone who examines the material produced by pseudoskeptics can see this apparent pattern. They hold everything said by the science/medical establishment as unassailable truth and authority, and never question or scrutinize it, ever, while automatically dismissing anything that opposes it. That’s not skepticism. It’s thought control, mind control, and suppression of truth.

Now, let me clarify something. It is NOT my position to argue that all paranormal claims are true. In fact, I happen to be skeptical of many claims myself. Instead, I am for open minded inquiry and honestly weighing the evidence. Not all paranormal claims are true, but some are backed by a lot more evidence than others. For example, ESP and ghosts are backed by a much higher percentage of testimonials than the Loch Ness Monster is. So, I argue that the evidence for paranormal phenomena should be ***considered and investigated as possibilities*** rather than rejected automatically ruled out just because it doesn't fit in with prevailing beliefs and world views. I do not claim to have all the answers to all the paranormal mysteries. However, based on my experience and research, I will argue that the overwhelming evidence as a whole points to the existence of some sort of metaphysical reality that exists, and that at least some paranormal claims have a basis in reality. My position is that SOME types of paranormal phenomena which are backed by evidence and widespread testimonials (e.g. ESP, Psi, Telepathy, NDE's) have something to them other than mere hallucination or delusion.

Very few people are willing to cast their skepticism on all sides, including their own beliefs. Most people, including the pseudoskeptics, seek to validate what they already believe, and reject the data that would cause them to change their beliefs. We at SCEPCOP try to avoid this by applying true skepticism to all sides, including our own, and basing our conclusions on the data itself rather than on our subjective emotional beliefs.

With that, let's begin the debunking of their common arguments.

Note: I have assigned numbers to each pseudoskeptical argument so that I can reference them throughout this book.

Note: Although CSICOP has changed its name to CSI, I will refer to it as CSICOP here because that is still what most people know it as.

"I shall not commit the fashionable stupidity of regarding everything I cannot explain as a fraud."
- Carl Gustav Jung

“It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware.”
- Albert Einstein

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes.”
- Marcel Proust, French novelist

Section I: General Arguments Against Paranormal Claims

Argument # 1: It is irrational to believe anything that hasn't been proven.

This is the main philosophy behind most skeptical arguments. As Dr. Melvin Morse, Seattle pediatrician and author who studied the Near Death Experiences of children said:

> "The notion that 'It is rational to only believe what's been proven' somehow got twisted into 'It is irrational to believe in anything that hasn't been proven'." (Interview from video: Conversations with God)

By "proven" skeptics mean proven according to the scientific method, which they consider to be the only reliable method. There are several problems with this argument:

1) First of all, just because something hasn't been proven and established in mainstream science doesn't mean it doesn't exist or isn't true. If it did, then nothing would exist until proven or discovered. Bacteria and germs would never have caused illnesses until they were proven and discovered, smoking would not cause cancer until it was proven, the planet Pluto would not have existed until it was discovered, etc. Anyone knows that this simply is not so. For instance, when Acupuncture was first introduced in the West, skeptics and certain scientists claimed that it had no basis and only worked due to the placebo effect because they couldn't understand how it worked. This reflected the typical false thinking of skeptics that anything they don't understand must be due to superstition or chance. However, practitioners and believers knew otherwise and were later validated by extensive studies have been done to show that it indeed does work for treating various ailments and getting results which placebos can't account for. An extensive listing of these research studies can be found on the Med lab website. In fact, the AMA (American Medical Association) has already declared that Acupuncture works and is an effective treatment, proving the skeptics wrong. The point is that Acupuncture worked *before* it was proven to work, not after. Skeptics

assume that everything that exists must be able to be analyzed in a lab. That's just not how reality works.

2) Second, just because something hasn't been proven to established science doesn't mean that it hasn't been proved firsthand to certain people. Established views are not the dictum of all reality. Many types of paranormal phenomena have been proved firsthand to eyewitnesses and experiencers. For example, even though the cases of NDE's don't prove the existence of an afterlife (at least not yet), those who have experienced them claim that the experience of the separation of body and spirit is firsthand proof to them of an afterlife, just as riding in a car is firsthand proof that cars exist, and they fear death no more. Those who have OBE's (Out of Body Experiences) also make similar claims, and they need no proof nor do they need to convince anyone. These claims are further supported by the fact that in many documented cases the subject could hear conversations or see things in other rooms and other places, which are later confirmed and verified to be remarkably accurate. Who's to say that they're wrong just because we haven't had the same experiences? That would be equivalent to saying that because I've never been to Japan, everyone else who claims to have been there is mistaken or deluded. The same goes for eyewitnesses of ghosts, UFO's (Unidentified Flying Objects), alien abductions, Bigfoot, etc. These sightings and encounters range from the obscure and distant to ones that are crystal clear and at point-blank-range, making them much harder to dismiss.

3) Third, many research experiments and studies conducted under the scientific method HAVE passed with positive results. For example, experiments in micro-psychokinesis done by Dr. Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunn at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research labs (PEAR) using random generator machines to measure subjects' PK influence on them, obtained positive consistent results for over 20 years. These were done under proper controls and scientific procedures, even according to prominent skeptic Ray Hyman, who investigated the Prince experiments in person and conceded that he could find no flaws in the methodology. The small but consistent results achieved by PEAR over 20 years are calculated by chance alone to be 1 in 1035. Likewise, the Ganzfeld experiments in telepathy done in the early 70's also had repeated success, with receivers in 42 controlled experiments scoring an average of 38 to 45 percent compared to the

chance rate of 25 percent. (See Argument # 17) The odds of that occurring by chance are less than one in a billion. More recently, controlled experiments involving four prominent mediums accuracy were done by Dr. Gary Schwartz of the Human Energy Lab of the University of Arizona. (See Argument # 16) These mediums achieved a hit rate 70 to 90 percent, even when in one experiment they were NOT allowed to ask any questions of the sitters or see them! Skeptics repeatedly continue to ignore this fact! (See the Jan 2001 edition of the *Journal for the Society of Psychical Research*) A list of studies that produced psi results can be found in Dean Radin's book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*. Many researchers will tell you that these studies prove that telepathy and micro-psychokinesis exist at least on the micro level. The skeptics, of course will say that those tests yielded impossible results and therefore were not done under properly controlled conditions, or else the researchers' overzealous desire to get psi results botched the results. But this of course reflects their bias and *a priori* dismissal of facts that don't fit in with their beliefs. It is not logical to deny the facts that don't support your beliefs, it is more logical to update your beliefs to account for the facts. Nevertheless, new scientific discoveries tend to pass through stages first before being accepted (see last paragraph of Argument # 8)

4) Fourth, just because something is irrational to skeptics doesn't mean that it is irrational to others who know or believe that it is real. Skeptics and scientific materialists do not have the monopoly on rational thinking. Lots of rational intelligent intellectual people believe in God, spiritual dimensions, or that there is more to reality than the material world. The skeptics' system of rational thinking is not the dictatum by which all things that exist must conform to. This can easily be demonstrated by all the things that skeptics have been wrong about before, such as flight, laws of physics, quantum mechanics, giant squid, etc. proving their fallibility.

Argument # 2: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

This is one of the core mantras of hard nosed skeptics, and is usually presented like this:

> *"If my friend told me that on the way here he was delayed because his car got a flat tire, then I would believe it because it is an ordinary claim. However, if he claimed that on his way here he was temporarily abducted by aliens in a UFO, then I would not believe his claim because it is extraordinary in nature. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."*

Now it would help if the skeptics who proclaim this argument specify what they would accept as extraordinary evidence. Otherwise, arbitrarily stating this argument gives one an out no matter what evidence is shown, and a way to move the goal posts endlessly. While it is reasonable to expect a higher standard of evidence for more extraordinary claims, there are nevertheless 7 problems with it to keep in mind.

1) First of all, this argument gives skeptics a shady and underhanded way to move the goal posts any way they like. By not defining the standards for "extraordinary", they are free to move the goalposts up further anytime their standards have been met on pure semantics, which they have often done.

   Definitions of what are "extraordinary claims" vary based on prior beliefs and experiences. Not everyone agrees on whether a claim is extraordinary or ordinary. Suppose we were fishes for example, and lived underwater our whole lives without ever seeing or hearing about land. The claim of land existing above water would be an extraordinary claim to us, though not to the creatures living on the land above. Now obviously just because the claim of land is extraordinary to us as fishes does not mean that the land doesn't exist. The point is that extraordinary claims are not extraordinary to everyone. What is extraordinary to some is ordinary and natural to others depending on their experience and level of consciousness. For example, the internal body energy of chi gong (or quigong) is a mystical force to Westerners

but has been a natural everyday part of life for thousands of years in China. There, chi is used, felt, and observed by its practitioners much the same as the effects of gravity are felt and observed by us. Likewise, having Astral Projections and Out of Body Experiences are extraordinary to those who have never experienced them, but for those who have them regularly, they are an ordinary part of life. In the same way, our cars, radios and cell phones are extraordinary to tribal natives in remote parts of Africa, but ordinary to us.

The best solution, in my opinion, is for everybody to put their cards on the table by honestly specifying their prior beliefs. This sets the standards for what is to be expected and leads to a better mutual understanding of each other.

3) Third, although this rule is good as a general guideline, the fact that 3 possible alternatives exist make this rule fallible.

a) It is possible for something to exist without leaving behind collectable evidence as a souvenir to us. For example, planes, radio waves, electromagnetism, and light move around without leaving “hard evidence” yet they exist. Therefore, extraordinary phenomena can exist without leaving behind extraordinary evidence.
b) It is possible for something to exist yet the evidence for it hasn't been found or understood yet, which is the case for almost every discovery in history from fire and wheels to gunpowder and gravity, to planets, atoms and electromagnetism.
c) It is possible that the evidence is already there but that it's subject to interpretation, making it controversial. This is true for instance, of the alleged mysterious implants found by doctors and surgeons in alleged alien abductees. So even when something leaves a trail, residue or mark, they are subject to interpretation anyway.

Of course, some skeptics have argued that all these things are possible but not probable, hence the requirement for extraordinary evidence. However, in order to really know all that is probable and improbable in the universe and reality, it would require that one have complete knowledge of every dimension and reality that exists in the universe and beyond. No one, neither skeptic nor believer, has that kind of knowledge. Therefore, it would be more accurate to state that:

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence to convince skeptics, but not necessarily to exist in objective reality."

4) Fourth, the argument is based on an unproven premise. It is based on the premise that paranormal phenomena are either impossible or extremely improbable. The reason it reflects this premise is obvious. Someone who believes that paranormal events are impossible is obviously going to need a lot more proof than someone who believes that they are possible and normal. However, just because miracles, ESP, sightings of apparitions, or OBE's haven't happened to skeptics doesn't mean they haven't happened to others. Likewise, just because I haven't been to Spain doesn't mean that everyone who has is mistaken or deluded. In order for one to know what is impossible or improbable, one would have to be an all knowing creator of the universe who possesses every knowledge that there is. But none of these hard nosed skeptics are anywhere near that level, so their assumption that paranormal events are impossible in my view is baseless. As scientist and author Arthur C. Clarke states in his first law:

> "When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."

5) Fifth, the argument favors conservatism or retaining the established theory in spite of contrary evidence. This has its pros and cons. Obviously, it makes sense to retain what works until something better comes along. However, when it comes to modifying our paradigms or world view we also tend to resist change, even when the data calls for it. This argument I fear, is used as an excuse for those who resist change. But if we never abandoned theories or expanded them, then science would not make progress. History has shown that progress comes with new discoveries and abandoning old outdated theories that no longer fit the new data acquired. This skeptical rule does not specify a sufficient condition for sufficient evidence. Therefore, rules should be established to clarify whether a competing theory is promising enough to warrant further research so that when those rules are satisfied, excuses can't be used to try to dismiss the evidence off hand. Otherwise, as Ron Pearson says in his article *Theoretical Physics Back Survival*:

http://www.cfpf.org.uk/articles/rdp/theoretical/theoreticalphysics.html

> “Science, however, cannot progress by theory alone; it requires a synthesis of theory and experiment. When observation runs ahead of theory to provide anomalies which seem inexplicable, then as history has shown by repeating itself over and over, the anomalies are avoided, ignored or discredited in order to maintain the status quo: to avoid the need to injure existing intellectual vested interests.”

6) Sixth, as my friend Michael Goodspeed pointed out in one of his articles, science has not historically gone by this rule:

http://www.rense.com/general51/embr.htm

> “Even hopelessly flawed arguments posited by the pseudoskeptic can have the power to flummox his opponents. In heated debates, he need not speak Truth to emerge "victorious." Games of semantics, creative ad hominem, and the deliberate misstatement of his opponents' positions are quite effective and oft-used tactics in his intellectual battles. The potential violence of King's English is brought to its greatest fruition by the pseudoskeptic. With his back against the ropes, he will daze his opponent with a well-placed quote from Carl Sagan ("Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence!"), send him reeling with the words "You can't prove a negative!", then slash his throat with Occam's Razor ("The simplest explanation is also the most likely!").
>
> These ordinarily sound scientific platitudes are used as the ultimate "get out of jail free" cards for pseudoskeptics who have no answers to inconvenient questions. Let's examine Sagan's assertion that "extrarordinary" claims require "extraordinary" evidence. The problem with this statement is that popular science does not require extraordinary evidence for its extraordinary claims. Big Bang theory may be the most extraordinary claim in the history of popular science. Here we have an idea that can be neatly encapsulated in eight words: "At first, there was nothing...then it exploded." (Source: http://w3trid.com/~wboggs/comics.html) But how can NOTHING explode? Big Bang theory "defies gravity" and violates innumerable laws of physics, it remains a HYPOTHETICAL mathematical model,

yet it is promoted as truth by NASA and institutions of higher learning around the world. Why has the mainstream never demanded the same standards of Big Bang theorists that it does of "paranormal" proponents?

Where are the "double-blind tests" validating Big Bang theory? Has Big Bang theory been tested by JREF or other skeptical organizations?

What about Einstein's theory of relativity? The general public seems unaware that it has always been and is stil a matter of contention among accredited scientists. As Marcus Coleman writes (From http://www.wbabin.net/physics/marcus.htm):

"Einstein's relativity was not accepted by a number of his contemporaries. Rutherford, widely thought of as the 'father of nuclear physics', considered it to be nonsense. Columbia University astronomer C.L. Poor in 1922,'26 & '30 gave unassailable refutations of the claims of Eddington, i.e., that observations of the 1919 South American solar eclipse confirmed Einstein's predicted gravitational attraction of light. (Poor also documents a similar situation existing with the 1922 West Australian eclipse and the claims of Campbell & Trumpler.) It was this 'proof' espoused by Eddington however, which brought Einstein his first acclaim and greatest fame.

"Poor showed clearly that the actual observations were not what was claimed and that they did not support Einstein's prediction. This is still a valid refutation of Einstein's presumed gravitational attraction of light, and notwithstanding the 'Gravitational Lensing' phenomenon, still remains standing as an unanswered challenge to Einstein's general theory of relativity and theory of gravitation. As a side issue, this relegates the concept of 'black holes' to pure science fiction as many non-conventional scientists contend - that is, despite evidence of the most recent discoveries being claimed as proof of their existence (even to including the latest data concerning the centre of the Milky Way), such 'proof' does not survive close scrutiny."

My point here is not to argue one side or another in debates over specific cosmological questions, but rather to demonstrate that these most sacred "truths" of popular science are in reality EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS which have never required EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE.

A more accurate phrase to describe the standards of pseudoskeptics (and, I'm sorry to say, much of the mainstream) is, "UNPOPULAR claims require extraordinary evidence." In its time, Galileo's thesis was considered quite extraordinary, as was Newton's. Why should this have been held against them? What is wrong with judging the evidence of a claim on its MERIT, while ignoring all pre-conceived notions of what is possible and impossible?"

Extraordinary evidence for 4 phenomenon

7) Seventh, from a certain standard, it could be said that we already have some extraordinary evidence for certain types of paranormal claims. Take the following 4 types of phenomena for instance.

UFO's (Unidentified Flying Objects): It can be said that there is extraordinary evidence to support the existence of UFO's from unexplainable photographs, video camera footage, multiple eyewitness sightings, abduction reports, Air Force radar reports, etc. All of these constitute convincing evidence for some people, but not for others. Although much of it can be explained as misperceptions, natural phenomena, weather balloons, aircraft, birds, balls of lightning, luminous Earth lights, etc. there are still many cases which are unexplainable and display features not known of any natural phenomena. One example is the *White House Merry Go Round Incident* of July 1952 where Air Force fighters repeatedly chased UFO's that kept appearing on Air Force radar was never adequately explained. Even skeptics admit that some cases are unexplainable, though they claim that "unexplainable does not mean inexplicable". (See Argument # 11) Another is the famous *Bentwaters UFO Incident* that occurred on an American military base in England in 1980 involving two dozen military witnesses, including Colonel Halt, of an up-close UFO sighting, which remains an undebunked and compelling

case. And after years of extensive investigations and interviews with Alien Abductees by Budd Hopkins and John Mack, who wrote books on the phenomenon, they concluded that there was more to the abduction experience than mere hallucination or sleep paralysis.

Since it's not always possible for extraordinary things to leave behind some type of tangible evidence, if I saw a UFO at close range and didn't have my camera with me and then it flew away, how am I expected to have extraordinary evidence? Am I supposed to be able to call that UFO back as if it were under my command or chase it like Superman? The fact that this event happened without our control makes us unable to satisfy this criteria. The same goes with ghosts and other things.

For hard nosed skeptics though, even good evidence will not be enough, since their mentality is to debunk rather than to discover and learn. You see, even if I had a piece of a crashed flying saucer and showed it to them, they would just say that it is probably just a piece of top secret military aircraft that we don't know about yet. They would want the full saucer itself to be convinced. Then if I found a whole saucer and showed it to them, that would still not be enough because then they could say that there is no proof that the saucer is extraterrestrial in origin and that it could just be a secret type of aircraft invented by the military. Of course, if they had real alien bodies in front of them, then it'd be much harder to dismiss, but you get the idea here. They will continually raise the bar. It's their mentality that causes them to close their minds and ignore everything that doesn't fit into their viewpoint. Nevertheless, many brilliant researchers have concluded that UFO's, whatever they are, are definitely real. Author and nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman who has spent years in this field has written a series of articles on this, which you can find at: http://www.v-j-enterprises.com. He has also published some well researched and convincing books such as *Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a UFO* and *TOP SECRET/MAJIC*. (Incidentally, Friedman has issued a public challenge to the US Air Force to publicly debate the UFO phenomena, which has gone unanswered.)

In addition, public coalitions such as *The Disclosure Project* (www.disclosureproject.org) have brought forth hundreds of high ranking government, military and intelligence officials and insiders who

have confessed to knowledge of government involvement with UFO's and ET technology, and the cover ups and secrecy surrounding them. See videos of their testimonies at press conferences here:

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2001
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vyVe-6YdUk

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2010
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtmpaM0PqyI

Ghosts and Spirits: The same goes with ghosts. There are many credible witnesses who have seen ghosts and experienced unexplainable things taking place in haunted houses, such as sudden apparitions, the feeling of an unseen presence, unnatural movement of objects, frequent displacement of things around the house, sounds, voices, etc. Paranormal investigators have even used geiger counters that detected electrical activity in a haunted area. Plus, there are also countless stories of hauntings in all around the world from the mundane to the incredible and uncanny. Although these claims are largely anecdotal, we must understand that while anecdotal evidence is not completely reliable, it is not completely unreliable either and is considered to be evidence in societal functions depending on various factors. (See Argument # 5 regarding the validity of anecdotal evidence) In addition, the amount of anecdotal evidence is also relevant because the higher the number and the more credible the witnesses, the stronger the evidence.

However, die hard skeptics will not consider anecdotal evidence to be valid evidence regardless of the amount. To them, credible evidence has to be measurable in some conventional way and reproduced at our beck and call. The problem with this is that what we can measure is limited to our level of technology. For instance, before we had the technology to measure seismic-activity in the Earth's crust, they still existed even though they couldn't yet be measured. Furthermore, since we can't see radio waves, electromagnetism, air, gravity, magnetic force, etc. but they exist anyway, it is logical to assume that there are other things that *could* exist but aren't yet measurable. Our technology may not be up to the level to measure other things that could be there. Or it may be that our technology can only detect things of the physical plane and not the spiritual plane. Looking for physical evidence of

something spiritual is like looking for evidence in the ocean for the existence of Mars rather than looking for it in space.

ESP (Extra Sensory Perception) and Telepathy: This is also especially true for ESP and telepathy. Since the 1930's with JB Rhine, experiments under controlled conditions have been done that revealed consistent well above chance results, which strongly point to the conclusion that ESP and telepathy exist at least to a small degree. These experiments, particularly the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld Experiments done from 1974 to 1997, were repeatable too, with 2,549 sessions showing above average results. (See Argument # 17) And PEAR has produced above chance results in telekinesis for nearly three decades. (See Dean Radin's website which outlines these at www.deanradin.com) The problem is that not all scientists and researchers are able to produce the same results. Skeptics usually point to the failures of psi experiments and ignore the successes. They will accept the failed psi experiments as evidence against psi, but not the successful psi experiments as evidence for psi. This is an obvious double standard, which is typical of closed-minded skeptics. They will continually raise the bar on evidence until you can't satisfy it, even demanding a 100 percent success rate! (Nothing is 100 percent, but even if you could get a 100 percent success rate, they would move the goal posts and charged fraud)

Of course, not all skeptics are that closed-minded, but this gives you an idea of the mentality of closed-minded skeptics. I'm not saying that we should only pay attention to the successes and ignore the failures either, but that we should take them both into account, and when we do so, there is in fact strong consistent evidence that psi exists, both from scientific experiments and overwhelming anecdotal evidence (see below). It is possible of course, that some scientists skew the psi results because they are eager to find evidence for psi, but why do skeptics automatically assume that it must be that? Obviously it's because of their preconceived beliefs (which they will not admit). If ESP and telepathy exist, it doesn't mean that it has to be controllable at our beck and call like some raw energy. We've only begun to scratch the outskirts on the nature of the whole thing anyway.

Besides experiments, countless accounts of psychic experiences abound, both documented and undocumented. In fact, studies show

that about 2/3 of Americans claim to have had psychic experiences, making them quite common rather than “extraordinary”. For instance:

> http://www.unexplainedstuff.com/Mysteries-of-the-Mind/ESP-Researchers.html
> “In their biennial report on the state of science understanding released in April 2002, the National Science Foundation found that 60 percent of adults in the United States agreed or strongly agreed that some people possess psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP). In June 2002, the Consumer Analysis Group conducted the most extensive survey ever done in the United Kingdom and revealed that 67 percent of adults believed in psychic powers. Report author Jan Walsh, commenting on the statistics that found that two out of three surveyed believed in an afterlife, said that as far as the British public was concerned, "the supernatural world isn't so paranormal after all.""

The most common type of psychic experience is telepathy, such as when loved ones and close friends from vast distances apart know at the exact time when something traumatic happened to the other. Sometimes, every detail of the traumatic event is observed or felt from afar. They are extremely powerful personal proof. I've had a few of these kind myself. Often, what was suddenly felt out of nowhere about what happened to the loved one is later verified to be true, occurring at exactly the time it was dreamt or felt. This suggests some subconscious telepathic link between people who are close. Experiences of this kind are in fact very common.

Skeptics of course say that these kind of things are nothing but pure coincidence, but this is unsubstantiated and a rush to judgment. They just don’t realize that just because something happens that they can’t understand doesn’t mean that it MUST be coincidence or chance. In the same manner, if someone spoke Spanish and I didn’t, that doesn’t mean that the person speaking Spanish is speaking random gibberish. If someone living in a tribe in Africa saw me turning channels with my remote and didn’t understand how remote controls work, that doesn’t mean that my pushing buttons on the remote and the channels changing are just a coincidence!

Mystical Experiences: And what about mystical experiences, spiritual enlightenment, being "born again", Near Death Experiences and Out of Body Experiences? These can also be said by those who experience them to be extraordinary evidence as well, because they are often self-authenticating and life changing in themselves. As the 1994 New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia states under *Mysticism*:

> "Mysticism in general refers to a direct and immediate experience of the sacred, or the knowledge derived from such an experience.… First, the experience is immediate and overwhelming, divorced from the common experience of reality. Second, the experience or the knowledge imparted by it is felt to be self-authenticating, without need of further evidence or justification. Finally, it is held to be ineffable, its essence incapable of being expressed or understood outside the experience itself… the experience itself is always of an Absolute that transcends the human efforts or methods of achieving it. (New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 1994)"

Experiencers will describe these experiences not as faith-based, but an "inner knowing." The fact that these type of experiences are dramatically life changing makes them "extraordinary evidence" themselves simply because ordinary experiences don't alter people's lives in this way. To say that these self-authenticating, life changing experiences are just pure imagination is closed-minded to say the least. As Faith, a practitioner of Shakti Gaivism and one who has had all-pervasive cosmic transcendental experiences of God in Unity state, constantly reminds us on my email group:

> "But remember .. there is "Belief" a chosen activity of mind... and there is an actual Knowing... via direct experience. They are 2 differnt things. I never could accept chosen Belief.. THAT is why I was an Agnostic.
>
> I like the example of the person working in an inner office with no windows. A co-worker could come in and tell them it is raining out. IF they accept That as truth... it is ONLY a chosen belief. But.. If they were to go outside themselves and stand in the driving rain and get soaking wet... then that is no longer a chosen belief... that would qualify as an actual Knowing.. by Direct experience.

> Your Mind is Limited... but "YOU" are far greater than your mind... you are ALL that is.... you just cannot see it yet. Mind keeps you contracted... but You can go beyond individual mind and tap the All Knowing. The only way you can KNOW this... is by experiencing it. I am not talking about "Belief" here... but direct experience. IF you were to accept what I say here... THAT would be a Belief... No Good in my book or yours either I am sure. So... I will NOT be disappointed if you do not ACCEPT what I say... on the other hand... You cannot really know that what I say is really illogical babble either... I think the fairest thing to do is... stay open to the possibilities... That there are things beyond the scope of Science, things that your current logic based min has not been exposed to... but that are none the less Possible." - Faith

"Extraordinary evidence" is subject to perspective because those who have firsthand direct experience of the phenomena already have their "extraordinary evidence" while others who haven't, don't. (See Argument # 5 regarding anecdotal evidence) For instance, those who have had full blown OBE's already have a realization and knowing that separation of body and spirit can and has taken place, and that there is life after death, especially if they are able to witness specific details at a distance which are later verified as accurate. For them the experience is as apparent as it would be apparent to you whether you were in your own car or house. Similarly, those with transcendent mystical experiences describe it as an "inner knowing" that transcends all description and removes all doubt. In the same fashion, those who have seen Bigfoot or ghosts firsthand at close point-blank-range also have their "extraordinary evidence."

Argument # 3: The Occam's Razor rule

Stated as: "When there are two competing explanations for an event, the simpler one is more likely."

This argument is a principle that skeptics often misuse to try to force alternate explanations to paranormal ones, even if those explanations involve false accusations or do not fit the facts. Originally, it began as a principle in physics having to do with parsimony, but somehow got twisted into a mantra for invalidating paranormal claims. It was popularized by scientist Carl Sagan in his novel turned movie "Contact", where Jodie Foster quotes it while during a conversation with a theist to defend her belief that God doesn't exist. (Ironically, at the end of the movie it is used against her in a public interrogation by a National Security Agent.) However, an analysis on the facts and assumptions of this argument reveals some obvious problems.

1) First of all, Occam's Razor, termed by 14th Century logician and friar William of Occam, refers to a concept that states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily." It was not intended to be used to evaluate claims of the paranormal as skeptics today use it for. As Phil Gibbs points out in "Physics FAQ": (http://www.weburbia.com/physics/)

> "To begin with we used Occam's razor to separate theories which would predict the same result for all experiments. Now we are trying to choose between theories which make different predictions. This is not what Occam intended…
>
> The principle of simplicity works as a heuristic rule-of-thumb but some people quote it as if it is an axiom of physics. It is not. It can work well in philosophy or particle physics, but less often so in cosmology or psychology, where things usually turn out to be more complicated than you ever expected. Perhaps a quote from Shakespeare would be more appropriate than Occam's razor: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
>
> The law of parsimony is no substitute for insight, logic and the

scientific method. It should never be relied upon to make or defend a conclusion. As arbiters of correctness only logical consistency and empirical evidence are absolute."

Even Isaac Newton didn't use Occam's Razor like the skeptics of today do. His version of it was:

> "We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances." (see same Physics FAQ)

Obviously, he was referring to explanations to explain *natural* phenomena, not paranormal or supernatural phenomena!

Brian Zeiler explains:

> "UFO debunkers do not understand Occam's Razor, and they abuse it regularly. They think they understand it, but they don't.
> What it means is that when several hypotheses of varying complexity can explain a set of observations with equal ability, the first one to be tested should be the one that invokes the fewest number of uncorroborated assumptions. If this simplest hypothesis is proven incorrect, the next simplest is chosen, and so forth.
> But the skeptics forget two parts: the part regarding the test of the simpler hypotheses, and the part regarding explaining all of the observations. What a debunker will do is mutilate and butcher the observations until it can be "explained" by one of the simpler hypotheses, which is the inverse of the proper approach"

2) Second, what is "simpler" is often relative. For example, having telepathic or clairvoyant experiences in some primitive cultures is very common (e.g. Tibetan, African, Amazonian) and those who have such abilities all their lives consider it ordinary. As Phil Gibbs points out in the same Physics FAQ:

> "Simplicity is subjective and the universe does not always have the same ideas about simplicity as we do."

Sometimes skeptics will invent an elaborate and far fetched explanation over a paranormal one, anything but a paranormal one is acceptable to

them. For example, when Charles Tart did that experiment where a girl had an OBE and read a five digit number on a ledge near the ceiling, the skeptics charged that she was carrying a secret fold out mirror and flashlight.

3) Third, even if we take Occam's Razor at face value the way skeptics use it, just because one explanation is more likely doesn't mean that it's always the correct one. For example, if I toss a die, it is more likely that I will roll numbers 1-5 than a 6. But that doesn't mean that a 6 will never come up. Therefore, occasionally an unlikely explanation can be expected to be true sometimes. However, skeptics treat Occam's Razor as if it were an absolute rule and use it as a label for denying any paranormal claim, no matter how valid.

4) Fourth, skeptics have used Occam's Razor so religiously that they misuse it by inventing false accusations and denying the facts in order to force a simpler more natural explanation. For example, if someone had an amazing psychic reading at a psychic fair (not prearranged) where they were told something very specific that couldn't have been guessed by cold reading, skeptics would start inventing false accusations such as: "Someone who knew you must have tipped off the psychic in advance", "A spy in the room must have overheard you mention the specific detail before the reading", "You must have something in your appearance that reveals the detail", "You must have remembered it wrong since memory is fallible", etc. Even if none of these accusations are true, skeptics will still insist on it simply because it's the simpler explanation to them. Likewise, if someone during an NDE or OBE hears a conversation or witnesses something many miles away and later upon verification, it turns out to be true, the skeptics will say that the simpler explanation is that the patient knew about the detail or conversation beforehand but forgot it. A skeptic did that to me once when I brought up how a psychic was able to tell me that I had a tragic period in my life when I was 9 years old, without any other information or clue from me other than my birth date. He kept insisting that I gave her clues which allowed her to predict that, even though I guaranteed him that I didn't. Examples like these suggest that skeptics are willing to support a false explanation rather than a paranormal one due to their bias.

Argument # 4: The Invisible Pink Unicorn / Santa Claus gambit.

Stated as: "Of course I can't prove that God, spirits, UFO's, paranormal phenomena or metaphysical realities don't exist, but you can't prove to me that invisible pink unicorns and Santa Claus don't exist either, but that doesn't mean that they are real."

This ridiculous comparison tactic is notoriously common among pseudoskeptics, yet so severely flawed and ludicrous that you have to wonder about the sanity of the person using it. It basically lumps all paranormal phenomena in the same category as anything a skeptic makes up out of thin air. It is more of a belittling tactic than a reasoned argument. Other similar variations of this are *"you can't prove to me that there wasn't a dragon hiding in my garage either"* and *" you can't prove to me that little green gremlins aren't stealing pennies from my pockets either,"* etc.

The premise behind this argument is that if a claim is unprovable, then it's in the same category as everything that is deliberately made up or fictionalized. However, not only is this false and a mere play on words, but it is a complete **straw man argument** because it falsely redefines the opposing position in terms that make it more easily attackable, using **false comparisons**. A simple examination reveals this.

1) First, the main problem with this argument is that what people *actually experience* is NOT the same thing as what a skeptic *deliberately* makes up for the sake of argument! To put the two in the same category is both illogical and underhanded. Since the skeptic using this argument hasn't really experienced invisible pink unicorns himself, everyone knows that he is deliberately making up something fictitious to put down something he doesn't believe in while the paranormal experiencer or claimant is not. Regardless of whether what the claimant experienced was real or not, it is certainly NOT in the same category as what a skeptic makes up out of thin air. Comparing them would be like comparing my real life experience of visiting a foreign country to any fictitious story you can find such as *Peter Pan* or *The Wizard of Oz*. That simply makes no sense, even if misperception was involved on my part in my experience. Not only that, but it would be shady and underhanded as well.

For the skeptic to claim that both are the same because they are unprovable would be like claiming that red cars and red apples are the same thing because they're both red. Though even skeptics know that this is not true, as mentioned, they prefer their beliefs and word games over common sense reality. Alas, if these pseudoskeptics really lived according to their beliefs, then they could not function in society. For example, if they got lost and had to ask for directions, they would not believe any directions given to them, not even from the most credible and well-meaning long-time residents of the area they are lost in. They know this too, and thus this is all a word game to them, not a way to live in reality. So let's just hope for their sake that they don't carry their silly little theories over to real life …

2) Second, likewise what someone *sincerely believes* is NOT the same as what someone *knowingly* makes up. Since the skeptic who uses this argument don't believe in invisible pink unicorns himself, it is pointless as well as inconsiderate to compare that to what people genuinely believe and experience, such as God, spirits, or ESP. Of course, just because someone genuinely believes something doesn't make it true, but to compare an honest person to a deliberate fraud is not a valid comparison.

3) Third, if there were millions of credible intelligent adults out there claiming to have seen or experienced invisible pink unicorns or Santa Claus flying in the air, then this comparison would have merit. But there aren't, so this comparison is without merit.

4) Fourth, another significant difference between experiencing God, the divine, or the mystical, and the fictional example of invisible pink unicorns is that throughout history millions of honest, sane, intelligent people have experiences with the former which resulted in life changing effects, but the same can't be said for invisible pink unicorns.

5) Fifth, just because something is unprovable does not automatically put it in the same category as everything else that is unprovable. For example, I can't prove what I ate last night for dinner or what I thought about. Without witnesses, I can't prove what I saw on TV or how high I scored in a video game either. But that doesn't mean that these things

are in the same category as every story in the fiction section of the library.

The bottom line is that while it is true that no one can disprove the existence of invisible pink unicorns, the evidence to support God, spirits and psychic phenomena, although mostly anecdotal, is vastly greater, more significant, more relevant, and more sincere than the evidence to support invisible pink unicorns, Santa Claus, and other fictitious examples deliberately made up by skeptics.

My close friend and fellow paranormal writer Michael Goodspeed, made similar points against this silly pseudoskeptical argument in his article *Mission For ET: Kill Santa*:

> http://www.red-ice.net/specialreports/2005/12dec/UFOsanta.html
> ”Everyone who has explored the UFO phenomenon has at some point been treated to the infamous "Santa Claus" analogy. Self-styled "skeptics" invoke it religiously (no pun intended) in discussions with anyone who believes there might actually be some evidence of alien visitation on planet Earth.
>
> "If you believe that a UFO crashed in Roswell, then I'm sure Santa will leave some nice presents under your Christmas tree." Any number of variations of this analogy (unicorns, leprechauns, bogeymen, etc.) are used to dismiss on a priori grounds all phenomena that rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and/or human testimony.
>
> The problem with the analogy is that it is pure fabrication. Yes, it is true that no empirical PROOF exists ether of aliens or of Santa (at least none that I know of), but only the willfully ignorant, the deliberately dishonest, or the cataclysmically stupid would ever claim that evidence of ET is no better than evidence of Santa.”

Argument # 5: The "anecdotal evidence is invalid" argument.

Stated as: "All that we have to support paranormal claims is anecdotal evidence, which is unreliable and invalid evidence."

Corollary: "Anecdotal evidence is worthless as scientific evidence."

> *"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world. All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it."*
> - Albert Einstein

The "anecdotal evidence is invalid" argument is perhaps the one most often used by skeptics, and also the core philosophical difference between believers and skeptics. In fact, this issue is often the impasse point that the debates between believers and skeptics reach. The term "anecdote" technically refers to an unpublished story or personal testimony. But in this case, it refers to any eyewitness account or claim of a paranormal nature without hard evidence to corroborate it.

This classification is one of the main categories that skeptics put paranormal evidence into in order to dismiss it. (Another category being the "unreplicable / uncontrolled" group that scientific experiments supporting psi are often put into. See Argument # 17 and Argument # 18) Skeptics who use this argument often claim that the evidence we have for paranormal claims is largely anecdotal and therefore worthless as scientific evidence. They also claim that anecdotal evidence is invalid because it is largely untestable and subject to error. Some skeptics will even go so far as to say that anecdotal evidence is zero evidence. Not surprisingly though, skeptics tend to quote anecdotal evidence when it supports *their* side! (another double standard) Therefore it appears that classifying evidence as "anecdotal" is simply a dimissal tactic to try to discredit evidence that skeptics can't explain away.

There are many factual and critical problems with this tactic.

1) While it may be true that most of the paranormal evidence is largely anecdotal in nature, by no means is it true that they are worthless or invalid. The fact is that most anecdotes, personal accounts, and what we remember check out most of the time or at least point to something

real. Rarely is it ever based on nothing at all. For example, if someone told me that there was a man dressed in a Santa Claus suit at the local mall taking photos with kids, the odds are that if I went to the mall to verify it, it would check out most of the time (and if the Santa dressed man isn't there at the time, he was there earlier at least). Or, if I went to the supermarket and asked the staff what aisle number the bread was at, most of the time the aisle he would tell me would be the one that has bread. Likewise, if I was inside a building and someone came in and said it was raining outside, most of the time it would check out. Either it would be raining now, or the wet floor would show that it was raining earlier. Similarly, when someone tells me what the ending is of a movie or book, it usually always checks out when I watch the movie or read the book. It's that simple! There are countless examples like this that I could use, most of which are very mundane. Obviously, these types of simple ordinary everyday anecdotes point to something real. **Now, since the skeptical philosophy about anecdotes doesn't hold up when applied to simple mundane examples, why should it be used to evaluate paranormal experiences and claims?** It makes no sense at all.

One argument I use that always gets these skeptics goes like this. I ask them about a country they've never been to before, such as France for example. And I state it like this: "Since you've never been to France before, and you have no real evidence that it exists other than anecdotes you heard, do you assume then that it doesn't exist for now? After all, the photos, videos, and souvenirs from that country could all be forgeries, you just don't know do you?" The skeptic will usually reply with "But I can fly to France and verify that it exists." And that answer totally misses the point, so I then counter with the key question "Yeah but UNTIL you go to France, do you assume for NOW that it doesn't exist, based on your skeptical philosophy that anecdotal evidence is invalid?" That stumps them EVERYTIME! They NEVER have a response to that one.

Suffice to say, if these skeptics truly believed that anecdotal evidence in general is invalid, then they could not function in life, for they would not believe anything told. They would refuse directions when they are lost, they would disbelieve every story told to them during their family reunions (even by the most honest and credible of their family members), invalidate all reports given to them in their workplace, etc.

They know it too, and most likely do not live that way. Therefore, as mentioned before, this is all just a word game play to them, not about seeking the truth.

2) Anecdotal is not considered zero evidence or worthless by our society. Anyone with common sense who isn't detached from society knows this. Courts consider eyewitness testimony as admissible evidence (though not proof). Employers consider reference letters, character references of friends and former employers, and background checks to be evidence of a job candidate's performance. Marketing people conduct surveys to get important useful information about the market. A degree of anecdotal evidence is relied upon in everyday society. Obviously, if anecdotal evidence was of zero value, it wouldn't be like this. But it is, so this demonstrates that these philosophical skeptics are all about playing a closed-minded philosophical word/labeling game, rather than being realistic about anything. Yet when confronted with reality, they continue to just throw labels and semantics out at them, until those who know better simply ignore them. It's obvious that they either lack the most basic common sense, are in denial, or playing a deliberate game of philosophy.

<u>Factors measuring degree of reliability in anecdotal evidence</u>

3) What these pseudoskeptics don't realize is that not only is anecdotal evidence mostly reliable with regard to everyday things, but its degree of validity is can be measured based on several factors.

a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims.
b) The consistency of the observations and claims.
c) The credibility of the witnesses.
d) The clarity of and proximity of the observation.
e) The state of mind of the witnesses.
f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim.

Here is an elaboration on these variables that determine the degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence, and how they have been more than adequately met for many paranormal phenomena.

a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. The more eyewitnesses, testimonies, and claims there are, the greater the weight of evidence. Anyone knows that, and almost everyone operates that way, except pseudoskeptics of course. Now, if there was only one claim in the world of a psychic experience, that wouldn't be much. But if a considerable number of people told me the same thing including people I know and trust, then I might think that there could be something to it. And if has to do with a sizable proportion of the world population throughout history, then that's incredibly significant. To put it simply, something is MORE likely to be true the more people attest to it. It's not an absolute rule of course, just a general tendency overall. In the case of psychic experiences, surveys show that two-thirds of Americans claim to have had them, which is a significant number ranging over two hundred million in this country alone, not counting the rest of the world! Even the skeptical organization CSICOP admits this stat in articles on their website such as http://www.csicop.org/si/2001-11/alternative.html and http://www.csicop.org/list/listarchive/msg00047.html

b) The consistency in the observations and claims of witnesses. The consistency in the reports we get is also a significant factor that people consider. People trust consistency because it makes lying or mistake much less likely. Of course, consistency in observations and experiences does not mean that what was perceived was really what occurred, but it helps rule out fraud for the most part and points us in the right direction. This criteria is also met for some paranormal phenomena. In multiple witness sightings of ghosts and UFO's for instance, there are accounts of several or more people witnessing the same thing and describing the same details. Even more striking is consistency among people who don't know each other nor live near one another. For example, in the case of NDE's, we have great consistency among experiencers in the form of seeing their body below them, moving through a tunnel, going to a great light of love that some call God, going through a life review, returning with permanent life changes, etc.

c) The credibility of the witnesses. The credibility of those making the reports and claims is also relevant. Factors that influence credibility include integrity, character, whether they've been known to lie

before, education and expertise, mental stability, how well we know them personally (obviously you would place more value in the claim of someone you know and trust as opposed to a stranger), etc. We definitely have anecdotal evidence from this group for various paranormal/psychic phenomena. That is indisputable. Doctors and scientists of esteemed reputations have attested to miracles or paranormal phenomena. Trained radar personnel and Air Force observers have observed UFO's both on radar and in the sky. Accomplished quantum physicists have found quantum evidence that make psychic phenomena more plausible, such as the discovery that particles behave differently when observed as opposed to unobserved, the nonlocality and connectedness of twin particles that are split, etc. (see Fred Alan Wolfe's *Taking the Quantum Leap* and Michael Talbot's *The Holographic Universe*) Prominent Psychiatrists such as Dr. Brian Weiss, author of *Many Lives, Many Masters*, have discovered and documented clinical evidence that past life memories are real and can be verified. Besides experts, people that we know and trust also claim to experience or observed things of a paranormal nature. Note that I'm not saying that an appeal to authority means that it's right, only that it carries more weight as a general rule.

d) <u>The proximity and clarity of the observation.</u> How close and clear an observation or experience takes place also an important factor. If someone thinks they see Bigfoot as a speck in the distance, then it could be dismissed as almost anything. However, if they saw Bigfoot at close-up point-blank-range, then it would be much more compelling and harder to dismiss. For the person to be mistaken at point-blank-range, he/she would have to be either lying or greatly hallucinating and in need of help. Otherwise, the skeptics should do some serious thinking about their beliefs! Again, this criteria has been met for some paranormal phenomena such as Bigfoot, UFO's and apparitions, which have been reportedly seen at point-blank-range in crystal clarity. Any research into will reveal lists of testimonials of this close-up nature.

e) <u>The state of mind of the witness at the time.</u> Another variable is the mental state of the witness, which include factors such as their alertness level, fatigue level, intoxication level, emotional level, fear and panic level, etc. This criteria has also been satisfied for

paranormal/psychic phenomena because many of the witnesses were sober, awake and sane at the time of their observations and experiences.

f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim. Whether the witnesses profit in any way is also a factor to consider, since it would put doubt on their sincerity if they have ulterior motives which might skew their objectivity. On the other hand, if they have nothing to gain then they are less likely to be manipulating us unless it was out of their genuine belief. This is especially so if they've suffered ridicule and damage to their reputation for their claims. The latter has been true for both paranormal experiencers as well as those who made new discoveries that validated paranormal phenomena. Esteemed scientists and experts in their fields have risked their reputations to share their discoveries. These include physicist David Bohm (a protйgй of Einstein and author of *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*) who postulated consciousness related quantum physics theories that contradicted the reductionist views of the universe, Miami Chair of Psychiatry Dr. Brian Weiss (author of *Many Lives, Many Masters*) who endured ridicule and criticism from his peers for his clinical reports and discoveries in past life regression, and others.

Now of course not all of the evidence for every paranormal and psychic phenomena have met all these criteria, but many of them have met some or all of them. Therefore we can conclude that the evidence for them is overwhelmingly strong, and certainly not zero evidence like pseudoskeptics claim.

In reality though, anecdotes are part of the scientific process of collecting raw data. They may not constitute scientific proof, but they are definitely a form of evidence. One of the world's top NDE experts, Dr. Peter Fenwick, explained this to a caller on a radio show here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKe8KHcIm1A

This isn't saying of course, that we should believe every anecdotal claim out there, which would be foolish. But just because an anecdotal claim doesn't fit one's world view, doesn't mean that it *must* be due to mistake, fraud or hallucination. The bottom line here is that although lots of people

saying something doesn't mean it's true, (the ad populum argument) it at makes it MORE LIKELY to be true compared to if no one at all said it was true.

Ordinarily, anecdotal evidence this strong is accepted as valid evidence in normal situations, so why not in regard to paranormal or psychic phenomena, especially when it's so common? The reason is because pseudoskeptics don't think these things are possible, therefore they assume that the fallibility of anecdotes must be the cause. In my experience with skeptics, no matter how much evidence you give them, they will still find excuses to reject them, even if it means imposing double standards, denying facts or preferring false explanations over paranormal ones. It is apparent that closed-minded skeptics aren't looking for evidence, but ways to shut it out to protect their views. After all, if they were really looking for evidence, then why would they shut it out every time it comes up?

It can also be said that the skeptic's subjective dismissal of another's experience is just as unreliable as any anecdotal evidence. Greg Stone, a consciousness expert and fierce knowledgeable debater on my discussion list, makes some intriguing points about how skeptics treat anecdotal evidence:

> (referring to the writings of Skeptic Paul Kurtz):
> "I suggest that rather than rejecting the eyewitness accounts of so many as unreliable, that he understand that his offhand subjective dismissal of another's experience is equally unreliable. What is missing is his attempt at understanding what is -- based upon the accounts. That they are laden with the complexity of personal observation does not mean the underlying phenomena are not actual and real. The confusion of the scientist in sorting out complex evidence does not itself render the phenomena unreal...it only means the scientist lacks the insight or tools to do the work. Only a fool of a scientist would dismiss the evidence and reports in front of him and substitute his own beliefs in their place."

<u>The Ebay feedback challenge that a pseudoskeptic failed and was caught lying red-handed</u>

To give you an example of the ridiculous extent they will carry this argument to, I once tested the skeptics on my own list by asking them if they a) considered the feedback rating on Ebay.com to be of any significance, and b) if they would trust someone more if they had a higher feedback rating rather than a negative one, and c) if they would bid on an item from a person with a 99 percent positive feedback rating or someone with much less and many negative comments in their seller profile. This was a no-win situation for them, for if they admitted that feedback ratings mattered in their decisions, then they would be acknowledging that anecdotal evidence was evidence after all. If they didn't, and remained consistent, then they would be denying a simple reality that every user of Ebay, even fools and children, knew, which was that the higher the positive feedback rating on a seller, the more reliable and trustworthy, and vice versa. Yet these skeptics chose the latter, giving plenty of outlandish reasons for doing so, saying that feedback ratings didn't affect their decisions on Ebay, even claiming that they were too easily faked. It was obvious they knew nothing about Ebay and the mechanisms set in place to prevent such things. One who calls himself Dr. H said:

> }> Feedback rating are not a reliable indicator
> }> because
> }> the feedback ratings themselves are unreliable.

I challenged Dr. H to find me even one experienced Ebay seller (with over a thousand positive feedback comments) who would agree that feedback ratings mean nothing with regard to trustworthiness. They couldn't and didn't. Though Dr. H claimed to have used Ebay before, he refused to give me his Ebay username ID (which was public information anyway) so I could check up on how experienced he really was in Ebay transactions. After dodging the question many times, he finally answered:

> }Again, what is your Ebay user name? Let me check
> to
> }see how experienced you are.
> }
> }WELL??????? Why did you dodge the question?
>
> I don't give out my personal information casually.
>
> That's one of the reasons that I don't get scammed.

Then, he agreed to give me his Ebay username after I give him my social security number, driver's license, and credit card information.

> }> }Dr H, let me see how experienced you are on
> Ebay.
> }> }Tell me your Ebay user name so I can look up
> your
> }> }transactions. If you want to look me up, my
> user
> }> name
> }> }is WWu777.
> }>
> }> First give me your SS#, driver's license #, and
> }> major credit card #
> }> with expiration date. Oh and the 3-digit
> security
> }> code on the back, too.
> }>
> }> LOL.
> }>
> }> Dr H

When I called his bluff and provided that information, he didn't follow through. How can you trust these bet-welching skeptics to seek the truth? When I pressed him on it, he finally gave me a username "Hiawatha".

However, the user ID "Hiawatha" had ZERO feedbacks on Ebay, proving that he lied about having a lot of experience on Ebay! Furthermore, the user name "Hiawatha" was listed as being located in Michigan, whereas this Dr H fellow is supposed to be from Oregon. Ebay sublisted other variations of the user ID name he gave me, but none were from Oregon. You can look it up yourself. If you go to Ebay and do a search for that user name "Hiawatha", here is what will come up:

http://search.ebay.com/ws/search/MemberSearchResult?frompage=fmrshowpage&userid=Hiawatha&fcl=3&amp%3Bsspagename=h%3Ah%3Aadvsearch%3AUS&frpp=50&sacat=-1&nojspr=y&fsop=1&catref=C5&fsoo=1&from=R7&nojspr=y&pfid=0

hiawatha (0)	7 years 10 months	MI, Unit States

Under that, Ebay lists these similar variations.

Close Matches:						
	h1awatha (160)	2 years 7 months	United Kingdom			
	haiwatha (383)	4 years 1 month	Germany			
	hawatha (28)	3 years 9 months	MA, United States			
	hia_watha (103)	4 years 10 months	CA, United States			
	hiawaitha (214)	3 years 9 months	Netherlands		Hiawaitha`s Wigwam	
	hiawatha. (4)	5 years 7 months	IL, United States			
	hiawatha9 (62)	3 years 8 months	ME, United States			
	hiawathad (5)	6 years 8 months	WA, United States			
	1hiawatha (1)	1 year 10 months	VT, United States			
	6hiawatha (2)	1 year 10 months	WI, United States			
	hiawartha (4)	3 years 7 months	Germany			
	hiawatha5 (9)	6 years 3 months	VA, United States			
	hiawatha6 (14)	6 years 1 month	FL, United States			
	hiawathia (2)	3 years 11 months	MI, United States			

As you can see, the user name he gave me, "Hiawatha", has ZERO feedback, and the user name is listed as being from Michigan too. And none of the close matches Ebay lists have a Hiawatha from Oregon either. How odd. Dr H claimed to have some feedback on Ebay, and that he lives in Eugene, Oregon. I've even called him out of the internet yellow pages for Eugene, OR before and got him on the phone.

Dr H was TOTALLY UNABLE to explain this discrepancy. Instead, he sidestepped it and questioned my ability to look up Ebay user names (like that's soooooooo hard). It's funny of him to say that, since he has zero feedbacks whereas my Ebay user name "WWu777" now has 84 feedback points, demonstrating that I am a real Ebay user while he is a pseudo and fraud.

Those are the undeniable facts.

To further expose his BS, I challenged Dr H to email my Ebay user name from his through Ebay's site, to prove that it is his. Anyone can send a message from their Ebay user name to another. Yet he refused to comply, or respond to the request, cause deep down, he knows he can't, cause he gave a false Ebay user name, and has no way to weasel out of it. So he remained silent about it.

Now, if these pseudoskeptics are dishonest about such little things, then why should we trust them in matters of the afterlife, paranormal, and scientific research?! This is the kind of fishy dodgeball they play. Obviously, this big argument of theirs that "anecdotal evidence is invalid" doesn't even work with simple down-to-earth venues like online auction transactions, so why use it as a measuring tool for reality and truth? Anyone with common sense knows that in regard to Ebay feedback being relevant, they are utterly and completely wrong. Yet, as I mentioned, these skeptics are not about truth or reality at all, but about playing philosophical word games.

Argument # 6: The memory malleability argument to dismiss anecdotal evidence.

Stated as: "Memory is malleable and unreliable. The mind often fabricates memories and/or edits them. Therefore, memory is not reliable evidence for paranormal claims."

A similar skeptical tactic to try to further discredit anecdotal evidence (covered above in Argument # 5) is to attack the reliability of people's memory. Skeptics argue that since memory is malleable, then the memory of paranormal experiencers is unreliable and therefore not to be trusted as valid evidence. This is related to the concept of *False Memory Syndrome*. Skeptics also try to justify it by using Occam's Razor, claiming that inaccurate memory is a more probable and simpler explanation than any paranormal one. However, two significant problems with this argument reveal that is not only weak, but inapplicable as well, making it one of the least convincing of the skeptical arguments.

1) The main problem with this is that although memory isn't perfect and doesn't work like a tape recorder, the majority of what sane people remember IS reliable and can be checked out and verified. (See Argument # 5) This is easily demonstrable. I could make a long list of things I did yesterday, last week, or even last year. And I could also make a long list of events that happened from yesterday to years ago. The vast majority of these things (I would bet over 95 percent of them) could easily be verified by other people, records/receipts, news articles of the events, etc. No one of course remembers every detail of every second of their life, but what we DO remember tends to be accurate and can be verified. This simple fact is severely damaging to the false memory dogma of this argument. Of course, there are bound to be a few details that are fuzzy that I may not remember correctly, but these are addressed in the second point below.

2) Where memory tends to be unreliable the most is in the area involving details that the brain considers too insignificant to remember (which is the category that most things go into such as the colors of the cars you saw on the way to work this morning, number of steps on a staircase, etc.). Thousands of details we perceive everyday which

our minds consider useless and insignificant are discarded. Unfortunately for skeptics and debunkers, paranormal experiences don't fit into this category because they tend to be significant, shocking, and revealing. As we all know, significant life-altering events in our lives make the biggest impression in our memory and tend to be remembered immediately with clarity, not years afterward. Since paranormal/psychic experiences belong in this category, this further damages this already weak argument even more. In fact, people describing shocking or traumatic events from long ago tend to say, *"It was years ago, but I can still see it as if it were happening right now."* These memories are often the same way years later as they were the day they occurred. This means that the memory is consistent and reliable. It's not like I just thought of an event from years ago that made no impression on me back then and suddenly realize upon reflection that it was paranormal! Therefore memories of paranormal events are not likely to be created by memory malleability. Such was demonstrated in my own case when a psychic who sensed from my "vibrations" that there was a tragic period in my life when I was 9 years old. When a skeptic challenged the reliability of my memory of it, which only occurred a year and a half ago, I easily met his challenge by showing him a post I wrote up about it the day after it occurred, which contained the SAME details that I remember now. (it's ironic these days when science and technology helps us prove skeptics wrong!)

Therefore, based on the two points above, the memory malleability argument is not only too weak to use to dismiss significant paranormal claims but also inadequate and inapplicable as well.

Argument # 7: Automatic dismissal of paranormal claims as due to mistake, lying or hallucination.

Stated as: "Since paranormal phenomena is impossible, those who claim to have them must be mistaken, lying, or hallucinating."

PseudoSkeptics who can't explain away a paranormal event usually classify witnesses as either mistaken, lying, or hallucinating. This again reflect an emotional and fanatical belief on their part that any paranormal event is impossible. They don't really know that a claimant *must* fit one of the above categories, they convince themselves of it to keep their mental model paradigms intact. This is further evidenced by the fact that many skeptics will continue to insist on one of these three categories even when such explanations do not fit the data or are far too unlikely. It's another example of where they prefer a false explanation over a paranormal one.

A common fallacy these skeptics make is to assert that those who claim to have paranormal experiences do not consider other mundane explanations for their experience, and instead jump to paranormal conclusions. Well that simply isn't true at all. In almost every story you read or hear about of a paranormal experience, the claimant almost always describes the possible mundane explanations that he/she considered, and how they were ruled out before coming to their unconventional conclusion. It's there in simple plain language, yet somehow skeptics never seem to see this. What skeptics don't understand is, if the possible mundane explanations don't fit the facts or are too improbable to be believed, then they can and should be ruled out.

Argument # 8: There is no evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena.

PseudoSkeptics are always saying, *"There's no evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena"* no matter how much evidence is shown to them. That's because this statement is a religion to them, not an objective statement. So no matter what evidence you give them, they will always deny it and raise the bar, simply because "there is no evidence" is a fixed belief to them.

So, if you give them stories and experiences, even from credible sources, they will reject it as "anecdotal" and inadmissible as evidence. If you give them scientific studies that show positive results for psi, they will argue that those studies did not have proper controls (since, if they did, they'd only get chance results, so their fixed logic goes). And they will argue that the studies must be replicable. Then when you show them replicated studies (e.g. Ganzfeld), they will raise the bar again and argue it was not replicated enough times (until a debunker disproves it is what they mean), ad infinitum. So no matter how many stories or replicable research studies you cite, it's NEVER enough. There is no clear bar to meet to qualify as "real evidence" to them, because essentially, there is NO EVIDENCE in their mind, thus there is no real criteria to be met. That gives them the license to deny ad infinitum. It's like playing a shady game of three shells with a con artist. You can never win because the conclusion has already been decided from the get go. That's what makes these Pseudoskeptics dishonest and not what they claim at all.

But the reality is that for some common paranormal phenomenon such as ESP, there is plenty of long standing evidence of both types - anecdotal and scientific. Controlled scientific experiments have yielded positive results for ESP for many years. From the 1930's with JB Rhine, to the current day with Dr. Charles Tart, Dr. Gary Schwartz, Rupert Sheldrake, and many other scientists, positive and consistent results for psi have been found to exist far above chance under controlled conditions. And series of psi experiments that have been replicated for decades known as The Ganzfeld Experiments, Autoganzfeld Experiments and PEAR (Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research) have yielded statistically significant and consistent results above chance as well.

In addition, the anecdotal and experiential evidence is overwhelming. Studies show that at least half the population of the world has had paranormal experiences, and according to the National Science Foundation, ***"60% of American either AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE that some people either possess psychic abilities or extrasensory perception".*** That's A LOT, no doubt. Common sense would tell you that if half the people in the world have experienced something, then it's pretty much certain that there's something to it other than fraud, misperception and fantasy, especially since a good number of these experiencers include credible down-to-earth people as well. Likewise, large percentage of people of all types from all walks of life have experienced ghosts too.

So you see, the evidence for such common paranormal phenomena is huge. As Parapsychologist Author Dean Radin has said, the evidence for psi is so solid and robust that if the same quality of evidence existed for something non-paranormal, it would definitely have been accepted as proven. But because the paranormal is considered taboo in the scientific establishment, there is a sort of censorship and knowledge filtration toward it. There is an automatic negative stigma and bias toward it that assumes that only crackpots believe in such things. So any scientist who openly supports the legitimacy of paranormal phenomena seriously jeopardizes their career and image among their colleagues. Thus, most scientists who believe in some paranormal phenomena will not declare it publicly, but become close enthusiasts. Mr. Radin discovered this, as many scientists confided in him their secret unofficial interest and belief that some of the paranormal is real.

Even in regard to UFO's there is plenty of evidence for them, albeit not proof. UFO photos and videos are controversial and vague of course, but many credible eyewitnesses, including Air Force Pilots and Astronauts, have seen them. They've also been tracked on radar doing aerial maneuvers that man-made aircraft could not do. (And as you know, hallucinations do not appear on radar.) In one famous official incident known as the *Washington Merry Go Round Incident of 1952*, jet fighters were scrambled to intercept UFO's after they had been tracked on radar. Afterward, to quell public panic, the incident was quickly dismissed though never fully explained. Nevertheless, something significant happened to trigger the alarm and scrambling of fighters, and it wasn't "zero evidence" for sure. But if you think that UFO evidence is strictly

confined to obscure sightings, think again. The famous *Bentwaters UFO Incident* that occurred on an American military base in England in 1980 involving two dozen military witnesses, including Colonel Halt, of an up-close UFO sighting, remains an undebunked and compelling case. And after years of extensive investigations and interviews with Alien Abductees by Budd Hopkins and John Mack, who wrote books on the phenomenon, they concluded that there was more to the abduction experience than mere hallucination or sleep paralysis. In addition, public coalitions such as *The Disclosure Project* (http://www.disclosureproject.org) have brought forth a large pool of high ranking government, military and intelligence officials and insiders, over 400 currently, who have confessed to personal knowledge of government involvement with UFO's and ET technology, and the cover ups and secrecy surrounding it. See videos of their testimonies at press conferences here:

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2001
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vyVe-6YdUk

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2010
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtmpaM0PqyI

Now, that's certainly NOT "zero evidence"! To watch some compelling films about UFO's, see James Fox's *Out of the Blue* and *I Know What I Saw* which you can see on YouTube.

Nevertheless, pseudoskeptics who claim to only want evidence continue to declare that "there is no evidence" when they get plenty of it from credible sources. Obviously, they are in a state of **perpetual denial and cognitive dissonance.** They deny and filter out anything that doesn't fit into their materialistic reductionistic view of reality, especially anything that has to do with paranormal or conspiracies, no matter what evidence is presented, even if its documented and scientific. One thing they are they not open to is possibilities. Any possibility that challenges the views of the establishment is simply not possible to them, even if the claims of the establishment itself are not scientific or contradicted by facts. It doesn't even have to be paranormal, it can be ANYTHING that opposes the official version of events, including conspiracies and lies by corrupt government officials or even the existence of shadow governments (which were acknowledged to exist in the 80's with the Iran Contra

Scandal). Thus, their bias and blind faith in authority as dogma is revealed.

Even if a highly credible source with a long history of accuracy suddenly makes a paranormal claim or a claim against an established view, they automatically dismiss it as bunk before even looking into it. If they do look into it, it will not be to learn the truth about it, but to debunk it. They will even deny evidence from scientific experiments as well. All the while, they tout, "Show me the evidence. Where's the evidence?" Yet when they are shown the evidence, they merely dismiss it or ignore it, acting as though they heard nothing, then go back to repeating that there's no evidence. I've seen them do this for years, in the media, on websites, in forum discussions, and on my own mailing list. It's as though they were deaf and totally belief oriented, seeing only what they want to see.

The problem for pseudoskeptics is that their denial and cognitive dissonance does NOT erase the evidence from reality. It may erase it from their own minds, but it does not the erase the evidence itself. Thus, it can be said that they are deluded and do not face up to reality.

Some examples of pseudoskeptics' denial of evidence and cognitive dissonance:

- If a psychic or medium gets an amazing hit, either something highly unusual and specific that doesn't apply to everyone or a deep dark secret about you that no one knows, which could NOT have been due to cold reading or guessing, then it means nothing to the pseudoskeptics, who will say that it must have been a lucky guess, or due to fraud or your own faulty memory, because no one has psychic abilities.
- If witnesses experiences a ghost, they must have been hallucinating, have an active imagination, or lying. Ghosts don't exist, so it must have been something else.
- If people see UFO's, including trained Air Force Pilots and Astronauts, then they must have misidentified natural phenomenon, because alien ships don't exist, at least not near Earth. And this is so even if radar picked up objects performing maneuvers impossible for man-made aircraft.

- If psychic abilities are demonstrated under controlled conditions (e.g. PEAR, Ganzfeld, SRI), then there must have been flaws in the protocols or lack of controls, because psychic abilities are not possible. PseudoSkeptics then demand repeatability and peer review. But when they get that, they then ask for more repeatability, from skeptical scientists as well. The bar is continually raised until a skeptical scientist finds or imagines any flaw in the experiments and declares them debunked. Only then are they satisfied. Clearly, they only want a particular result (only chance results), not the truth. If it doesn't get debunked, then they accuse the experimentors of improper controls or deceit, as Randi is infamous for doing.
- They claim that no psi study that shows positive results has ever been published in credible scientific journals. Yet when they are shown citations that they have, they simply become deaf and ignore them. Then they have the nerve to simply repeat their lie again, as if they never even heard you! This is very infuriating and dishonest
- If a resuscitated patient has an NDE or OBE where he/she sees details that they could not have known about, then it must have been lucky guesses or unconscious memories, because there is no soul that can leave the body..
- Even if a non-paranormal claim simply challenges the official story, it is denied and dismissed. For example, all vast the evidence in the JFK Assassination pointing to more than one gunman is automatically dismissed and denied, no matter how strong it is, despite the fact that the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded back in the late 70's that "President Kennedy was probably killed as a result of a conspiracy." Yet when some author publishes a book supporting the lone assassin theory that distorts the facts, lies and obfuscates the issues, the skeptics are quick to praise it without any objective open review, for it supports their view.
- Likewise, when thermite/thermate and explosive residues are found in the World Trade Center dust from 9/11 by scientists with scientific means, the skeptics simply ignore it, because it goes against the official 9/11 story. Or they look for ways to explain it away, using even the most improbable assumptions. Or when key witnesses at Ground Zero such as William Rodriguez testify that they heard huge booming explosions coming from the BASEMENT level of the World Trade Center Towers, and occured BEFORE the planes hit the towers, totally contradicting the official story, the

> skeptics completely ignore and censor it out of their heads. In fact, all the compelling evidence presented by AE911Truth.org on their site and videos that makes sense to open-minded people is completely ignored and dismissed because simply put, if it contradicts the official version, then it must be false. That is NOT objectivity or open minded investigation at all, period, but blind-fanaticism.

Here is an interesting example of denial of evidence. I found this blog which misrepresented what SCEPCOP is about, labeling it "kooky" as well. So when I tried to clear up her misunderstanding, she replied that she just wanted to see evidence, that's all, insinuating that no one so far had been able to give her any evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena. She even wrote in her blog, *"If SCEPCOP wants to be taken seriously, all they need to do is present some evidence for the paranormal."* This requirement was a sinch, so to get her informed me and other SCEPCOP folks sent her a host of links, resources, books and videos with the evidence she asked for. In response she became overwhelmed and went to the JREF forum to ask how she can dismiss so much evidence being directed at her, thus demonstrating that her true agenda was not that of an open minded truth seeker, but of confirmation bias, seeking only that which supported her belief, or disbelief, in anything paranormal, regardless of facts or evidence. That was a bit deceptive of course, but it's typical behavior of pseudoskeptics to ***claim one thing and do another.***

Here are her exact words on the JREF forum, revealing her true agenda and mindset:

> http://forums.randi.org/showpost.php?p=4977768&postcount=87
> "Phew I'm glad there's a thread about this here! I have a blog and I made a post about SCEPCOP awhile back...they recently found it and a bunch of them have started making massive comments on it, so many LINKS!!! They even made a thread about me on their forum, which I was stupid enough to join...it's exhausting reading the threads there so I have no desire to go back.
>
> Maybe you guys could help me out with something...they've been giving me all of this "evidence" and recommending books etc. but I have no inclination to read it. They've said that I'm not being

skeptical because I haven't looked at their stuff and because I won't read the books...really it's because it bores me...but they say in order to be truly skeptical or whatever I have to look at everything, and I know that's not true, it's ridiculous that they would expect that of me, but how can I respond to this???"

She later admitted that she had no interest in examining the evidence after all, and so didn't feel like investing the time in it. So you might be wondering, why did she ask for evidence then if she wasn't interested in it? That makes no sense of course, is illogical and does not compute. But then again, pseudoskeptics are not about logic or making sense, but about faith based disbelief and fanaticism.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, a member of SCEPCOP, explains the psychology behind the pseudoskeptics' **cognitive dissonance:**

http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html

"1. Psychology: Rationalization through Cognitive Dissonance

Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife - which is fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity.

> Then the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her own personal beliefs and will try to rubbish, denigrate, dismiss and destroy the new information (including scientific proof of some psychic phenomenon) which gives the skeptic a lot of intense anxiety. This skeptic cannot allow his lifelong deeply cherished beliefs against an afterlife to be proved wrong, to be totally incorrect. So this skeptic will use every trick, every bit of energy and every means to try to rationales i.e., to reduce cognitive dissonance. She will defend her skepticism and ridicule and viciously attack any positive evidence for the afterlife - which is causing the anxiety to the skeptic. I repeat, all sense of scientific objectivity will be lost."

Update September 2009: Skeptic Richard Wiseman, a die hard critic of psychic phenomena, has finally conceded that the case for remote viewing and ESP has been proven by normal scientific standards! For more info, see these blog entries:

http://deanradin.blogspot.com/2009/09/skeptic-agrees-that-remote-viewing-is.html

http://subversivethinking.blogspot.com/2010/04/richard-wiseman-evidence-for-esp-meets.html

Argument # 9: Science is the only reliable method.

Stated as: "The only reliable way to know about anything is through the scientific method. All other methods are unreliable."

This statement is usually made by skeptics who glorify and worship science as their God, even though they would never put it in those terms due to the connotations of them.

1) First, this is an absolutist statement since there is not just one single way to know everything. Other ways of knowing things include direct observation, personal experience, textbooks and articles, and advice from those who are wiser and more experienced than us. There are countless real things I can experience that don't need to be proved by the scientific method. Even mundane examples can demonstrate that. For instance, I can see rainbows by direct observation even though I can't bring them back to scientists, though they can see them too if they chose to go look. I can learn parenting through the experience of being a parent, and swimming by the experience of going into the water. Marketers and businesses learn the marketability of their products through surveys. We can also learn valuable things from wiser and more experienced people too, despite the fact that we didn't use any scientific method to check them out. In addition, I can't prove where I was yesterday either with the scientific method, but that doesn't mean that any claim of where I was yesterday is false. Neither can I prove what I dreamed last night with the scientific method either, but that doesn't mean that I don't know what I dreamed about. Likewise, if Acupuncture or some alternative medicine technique works for me, then I know that it works for me regardless of whether it's proven by the scientific method or not. Not everything has to be official for it to be true. (See rebuttal to Argument # 1 for more on that.) The scientific method is a tool for testing hypothesis and finding out things, not for defending one's own paradigms.

2) Second, since successful psi results have been achieved in tests conducted under the scientific method, (See Argument # 17 and Argument # 18) it can be said that evidence for psi has been gained from the scientific method anyway. Not surprisingly though, skeptics

tend to only accept results done with the scientific method that show the results *they* want, which is no psi results and only chance results.

3) Third, things don't have to be proven by science in order to be true. (as explained in Argument # 1) Many things were true and real before science discovered or proved them. Though the converse of this is also true, why should we consider the skeptic's subjective dismissal as being more reliable than one's direct experience? Besides, without direct experience, how would we know anything at all? Greg Stone from my discussion list, put it very well in his post:

> "But balanced against science's supposed lack of evidence one finds the DIRECT EXPERIENCE of those who report. And the reports are consistent and voluminous. Thus, while science, according to Kurtz, cannot weigh in definitively on either side of the equation, the DIRECT EXPERIENCES are a fact. And, as everyone knows, we do not need to check with science to confirm all the aspects of our daily lives...we did not need to wait for science to properly define and experiment with the atom before we could manipulate things made up of atoms.
>
> Experience, direct knowledge, is of a higher order of understanding than mere subjective speculation without experience. If one were to accept your argument that experience is intrinsically invalid as a way of knowing, then you undermine your entire position as you have nothing else upon which to base ANYTHING. Thus, we see the weakness of a position that replaces firsthand knowledge, firsthand experience with the SPECULATION of someone who has no experience.
>
> Which one does the real scientist consider more valid... the report of a direct experience (make that volumes of consistent reports) OR the musings of someone with NO experience, only their speculation?"

Where these closed-minded skeptics make the mistake is in seeking proof from scientific experiments (which they invalidate anyway when they don't get the results they want) rather than from direct experience, which is the ultimate true validation. The mystic Faith Rada, my spiritual advisor and mentor, sums this up well:

“The fact is your post MAY be absolutely correct and valid BUT it COULD also be just someone posting "lies and foolishness" as far as a pseudo/skeptic is concerned." What constitutes Proof? Actually it is a personal thing and not a SET thing. It is THAT POINT at which something is able to be accepted as REAL. Mundane words do not hold the power to do that .. one NEEDS Direct experience. And posting an article that May well be valid is STILL not a PROOF when the viewer demands Personal experience. And they have every right to. As the dictionary post below.. it can be a PROCESS. Add to this the MAJOR problem that these pseudo/skeptics really do not WANT proof.. because it would destroy their perspective and you end up with an impasse. Remember that saying? A person convinced against his will... is of the same opinion still. IT's EGO at work.

PROOF ~
 Etymology: Middle English, alteration of *preove,* from Old French *preuve,* from Late Latin *proba,* from Latin *probare* to prove -- more at **PROVE**
 1 a : the cogency of evidence that compels acceptance by the mind of a truth or a fact **b :** the **process** or an instance of establishing the validity of a statement especially by derivation from other statements in accordance with principles of reasoning
2 *obsolete* **:** **EXPERIENCE**
3 : something that induces certainty or establishes validity

Obviously anyone can type up ANY statement, make ANY claim of validity and witnesses and circumstances that they want.. Even when we investigate there are judgments that need to be made. Is this person trustworthy? Certainly lab. scientists working on major projects HAVE falsified test results. People.. GASP! LIE all the time. OR they may honestly misinterpret things, but UNLESS YOU are directly involved.. as in FIRST HAND... then it must remain 'here say'. This does not mean it is useless.. BUT it is certainly not living PROOF either. I was and still am a "skeptic" .. in the sense that with no direct proof I will not accept. I have had The Direct proof.. of things within the mundane world and also Transcendent Proof of Pure

Consciousness. The latter is "REAL" proof since it makes you ONE WITH the actual event ... eliminating the need for the dualistic mind to pass judgment on what is being "experienced" since it lies BEYOND the mind's ability to think on... but that is another subject so .... forget that for now.

It was not until I had a number of "remote" viewing myself that I had the proof I needed. Plus I did not depend on my own mind..since the finite mind canNOT be trusted.
There were at times people I could share with that were able to validate what I saw. They GOT proof since they were an active part of it the event. .. but if I were to write about it today what would the point BE? It is certainly not PROOF...A curiosity to consider for those open enough to do so, which is great, but certainly NOT proof.

So.. proof for those involved directly but NOT for those who read about it after the fact .. See what I mean?

Such sights as you post ARE useful. It is a good place to start looking... and that can allow us to be more open to our own necessary Direct and validated Experiences. I say validated experiences because the mind IS a tricky place. People do see what they WANT to see and do not see what they do NOT want to see. What is even meant by real? That is a VERY good question.

One needs to validate for ones self... whatever that takes. Everyone GETS to know ONLY when it is their time to know.. to expand into their full awareness. Not everyone Is ready. Knowing that we are consciousness FIRST and physical body second has a LOT of ramifications for the psyche... something else to contemplate.
Peace, Faith"

Now I don't dispute that science is an effective way of collecting knowledge, testing theories, or discovering how things work. The point is that it is not the ONLY way. And since science has not disproved the existence of God, life after death, spirits, or psi, then there is no point in skeptics trying to use science to dismiss those things. Furthermore, the

best method of knowing things also depend on the kind of knowledge one is attempting to acquire. There are many issues and problems everyday for which empiricism is impractical or impossible. We make many rational daily decisions both individually and as a society that are based on no empirical observations. Sometimes common sense and direct observation are all that are required.

Dean Radin points out in the beginning of his book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*, that new scientific discoveries tend to go through stages. He writes: (page 1)

> "In science, the acceptance of new ideas follows a predictable, four-stage sequence. In Stage 1, skeptic confidently proclaim that the idea is impossible because it violates the Laws of Science. This stage can last for years or for centuries, depending on how much the idea challenges conventional wisdom. In Stage 2, skeptics reluctantly concede that the idea is possible but that it is not very interesting and the claimed effects are extremely weak. Stage 3 begins when the mainstream realizes not only that the idea is important but that its effects are much stronger and more pervasive than previously imagined. Stage 4 is achieved when the same critics who previously disavowed any interest in the idea being to proclaim that they thought of it first. Eventually, no one remembers that the idea was once considered a dangerous heresy.
>
> The idea discussed in this book is in the midst of the most important and the most difficult of the four transitions - from Stage 1 into Stage 2."

Argument # 10: Paranormal phenomena aren't possible because they contradict known laws of science.

First of all, natural laws as we define them are based on our interpretation of empirical testing and observation. Therefore, they are subject to constant change as new discoveries are found which challenge or contradict our models. Throughout history, we have constantly updated and expanded our understanding of the laws of how the universe works. In the past, it was said that things like heavier than air flight and going to the moon were impossibilities. Skeptics of those things were proven wrong of course. At one time, according to the law of aerodynamics, a hummingbird shouldn't be able to hover, yet it did, so we had to figure out why and revise our laws of aerodynamics. When Albert Einstein discovered that light travels at a constant speed (e.g. if you're traveling in a car and shine a flashlight forward, the car's speed is not added to the light's speed), and formulated his theory of relativity (time slows down as you go faster), and postulated that gravity involves distortion of space, all these things contradicted the Newtonian laws of physics at the time, yet they were eventually validated. As of now, special relativity and quantum mechanics are at odds with each other, and physicists are seeking a grand unified theory to unite them both. As history has shown, we constantly update and expand our laws of physics to fit the data, not deny the data and new discoveries just to protect our beliefs.

In fact, new discoveries in quantum physics each year are shattering the materialistic reductionist view we had of the universe, making psychic phenomena and other dimensions more plausible. These include the non-locality (meaning distance and space don't exist) of twin particles (discovered by Alan Aspect in 1982), string theories that postulate several other dimensions beside our own, the discovery that particles behave differently when observed (making psychokinesis more probable), etc. (See Fred Alan Wolfe's *Taking the Quantum Leap* and *The Spiritual Universe*) Each new discovery seems proves the skeptics wrong and moves us further from their views and closer to metaphysical paradigms. This is obviously not a good sign for their case. It appears that the skeptic camp is a sinking ship that one should get off to avoid embarrassment. Just the discovery alone in quantum physics that all

matter is a form of vibrating energy makes paranormal and psychic phenomena much more plausible and understandable.

Finally, good theories try to unify the data. As Ron Pearson notes in his article *Theoretical Physics Back Survival*:

> “Theories make sense of the experiments and show how apparently unrelated phenomena are aspects of the same thing. Good theories provide unifications. For example, magnetism and electricity were separate fields when science was in its infancy. As understanding grew it was found that magnetic effects could be produced by electric currents and the converse also applied. Now we speak of electromagnetism as a single force; one of the four forces of nature. Theoretical physicists hope ultimately to join these by a unified field theory arising from a single 'superforce'.”

Argument # 11: Unexplainable does not mean inexplicable.

This phrase is emphasized by arch skeptic Michael Shermer, author of *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time***.** This argument means that just because something is unexplainable does not mean that paranormal forces must have been involved, only that we haven't found the explanation for it yet. However, skeptic who use this should also remember that the following converses are true as well:

1) Just because something happens that they think isn't possible doesn't mean that it didn't happen. To do so would be to deny reality.
2) Just because something happens that they think isn't possible doesn't mean that it *must* be due to misperception, fraud, or hallucination.
3) Just because a natural explanation hasn't been found for something unexplainable doesn't mean that only a natural explanation could exist.
4) If a natural explanation doesn't explain all the facts, that doesn't mean that you should insist on it anyway just to protect your belief system.

Take the following example. In the reincarnation cases investigated by Dr. Ian Stevenson in his book *Twenty cases suggestive of reincarnation*, none of the natural explanations account for the data and facts of the cases, such as babies and children having accurate detailed memories of their past lives which couldn't have been obtained in their environment, but are later verified to be true. Dr. Stevenson concludes that the reincarnation hypothesis best fits the data he personally investigated. Though the skeptic is free to insist that a natural explanation must be the culprit anyway, (and often does) he does so by flatly denying the four converse rules above. Would Shermer approve of that, I wonder? (For more on the reincarnation phenomena, check out *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*)

Argument # 12: Skeptics don't have beliefs. They make assessments based on evidence.

Some skeptics on the extreme end even go so far as to claim that unlike the rest of the world, they don't have "beliefs" but reasoned judgments based on pure evidence alone. Not all skeptics claim to be immune to beliefs, but there are some that do. This is plain silly though, because statements of belief can be found in almost anything someone says. We all do things and say things based on assumptions we have, which are formed in part based on beliefs. These assumptions are sometimes in the line of beliefs because they are not always based on hard evidence, but our world views, predisposition, and natural tendencies. Beliefs are especially found in the skeptical arguments discussed so far, as most of the skeptical arguments in this book are clear statements of *a priori* belief, such as "It is irrational to believe anything that hasn't been proven" (Argument # 1) and "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." (Argument # 2) Further common skeptical beliefs include "Believers in the paranormal are irrational", "Psi is improbable", "Psychics and mediums prey on the gullible" and "Psi experiments show no better than chance results when proper controls are put into place".

Though skeptics will claim that their views are based on the evidence that they've examined, they rarely apply their skepticism to their own beliefs, which any true skeptic would do. Furthermore, upon close scrutiny it's obvious that they prefer false explanations to paranormal ones, resort to character assassinations, and ignore data that doesn't fit their hypotheses. Strange behavior for people who don't have beliefs! Rather, I think that skeptics are using this "I don't have beliefs" argument to excuse themselves from having to defend their views, while shifting the burden to believers and paranormalists.

Argument # 13: Skepticism is not cynicism. It is a method of rational inquiry.

This statement is often found in introductions or FAQ's sections of skeptical websites and books. Here is an example from the website of *The Skeptics Society*:

> http://www.skeptic.com/faqs.html
>
> "What does it mean to be a skeptic? Some people believe that skepticism is rejection of new ideas, or worse, they confuse "skeptic" with "cynic" and think that skeptics are a bunch of grumpy curmudgeons unwilling to accept any claim that challenges the status quo. This is wrong. Skepticism is a provisional approach to claims. It is the application of reason to any and all ideas-no sacred cows allowed. In other words, skepticism is a method, not a position."

What these skeptics don't understand is that people in general don't have misconceptions about skepticism as a concept, nor do they have any problem with it. The cynicism that people see in so called "skepticism" is not due to their misunderstanding of the word itself, but due to the cynical BEHAVIORS and ACTIONS of the PEOPLE who call themselves skeptics but are in fact pseudoskeptics who fit the list of criteria described in the Introduction of this book. These people do not inquire, but seek to discredit and debunk anything that lies outside of the establishment paradigm, including all paranormal and psychic phenomena. Yet never once do these pseudoskeptics use any skepticism on anything that comes from the establishment.

According to *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, a skeptic is:

> "One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic
> "In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than *inquiring*, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than *suspending judgment*, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. Hence, we call them ***pseudoskeptics*** (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete *antithesis* of what skepticism truly means.

When pseudoskeptics make cynical arguments such as those presented in this book, they portray to others a cynical closed method of thinking, dismissing anything that they don't understand or consider possible. That's where this impression comes from. Cynics who masquerade behind science and skepticism often reveal their cynicism through their words, thinking methodologies, closed system of beliefs, and dogmatic assertions. The six common flawed tactics described in the introduction of this book are the kind of things that give others the impression of cynicism. This is why even some of the well known skeptics and leaders of organized skeptic groups are perceived as cynics, including James Randi (the famous magician, author, debunker, and nemesis of Uri Geller), Michael Shermer (editor of *Skeptic magazine*), Joe Nickell (one of the leaders of CSICOP), Martin Gardner (psychic debunker), Susan Blackmore (University of London Psychology Professor and proponent of the Dying Brain Hypothesis of NDE's), etc. These people use closed ways of thinking to dismiss data that don't fit into their hypotheses, which is prevalent from statements made in their articles/books. Therefore, these closed-minded skeptics are the ones that have the misconception of mistaking their cynicism with true skepticism.

Argument # 14: Believers in the paranormal are thinking in primitive, irrational and childish ways.

This statement is often made by the more extreme and opinionated type of skeptic. Fortunately, many skeptic groups have realized the extremity and folly of these type of statements and have stopped making them in public. The fact is, many who hold spiritual beliefs or metaphysical views came to them after researching all the data and examining the different explanations, making informed conclusions.

Nevertheless, it can also be argued that closed-minded skeptics who are out to debunk everything paranormal are thinking in irrational and uninformed ways because they simply refuse to consider the data that support strong paranormal phenomena cases, but instead dismiss it on *a priori* grounds. If they are not up to date on the evidence, then they are the ones who are acting uninformed. How can one be truly informed if they only wish to look at the data that support their views? Rationalizing away facts to defend one's paradigm is not an example of rational thinking.

Furthermore, people who hold paranormal or other non-empirical beliefs may simply be expressing a cultural, personal or spiritual view, and nothing more. This does not mean they are less intelligent, more irrational or childish than non-believers of the paranormal. In fact, these people are usually capable of applying rational and intelligent thought to a wide variety of everyday situations when it matters, and no doubt do this effectively and rationally.

We have to remember that basically, it is simply our *a-priori* beliefs that affect our acceptance of the data for paranormal phenomena. Closed-minded skeptics and debunkers know going into an investigation that there is a natural explanation, and are firmly committed to finding it. The problem is that it can (and has in some cases) lead to incorrect or premature conclusions. It also doesn't do much for skepticism's reputation when a researcher goes in (falsely, and obviously so) proclaiming neutrality when the reality is otherwise. Why not just be honest and say "I don't believe it. It is possible to convince me, but I don't

think that is going to happen because in my experience, the world doesn't work that way.'"?

Argument # 15: Skeptics are defending science and reason from a rising tide of irrationality.

This phrase has often been used in articles and websites of skeptical organizations and magazines, including CSICOP's *Skeptical Inquirer* and others. Fortunately, this phrase is now critiqued by skeptics themselves, and used less. Michael Sofka of ISUNY and author of the article *Myths of Skepticism* points out that CSICOP often uses it in their fundraising requests. Folklorist Stephanie Hall comments on this in her article *Folklore and the Rise of Moderation Among Organized Skeptics*:

> http://www.temple.edu/isllc/newfolk/skeptics.html
> "Another change advocated by many Skeptics is in the choice of language used to represent skepticism to others. For instance, a phrase that has commonly appeared in articles by Skeptics and in statements in the brochures or Web sites of skeptic groups was an expression of concern about "the rising tide of irrationality." But although this phrase became an identity marker demonstrating alliance with organized skepticism and a statement of shared concern, it has increasingly been criticized by Skeptics themselves. At the NCAS Millennial Madness workshop in May 1999, Chip Denman critiqued this phrase as, perhaps, skepticism's own bit of Millennialism, asking questions such as, "What do we mean by irrationality? How is it measured? How do we know it is rising?" It seems that this phrase, as a marker of skeptical identity, may be going out of fashion.
>
> These events are an indication to me as a researcher that Skepticism is going through changes as it grows, as we might expect in any social movement, and that local groups are beginning to discover the things they have in common. Perhaps because the movement has steadily grown and this may inspire confidence and stability, Skeptics also seem increasingly willing to critique themselves and express strong views on the ways they do and do not want skepticism to be presented to the public. This self-analysis is, of course, a good thing, for any rational endeavor should be willing to critique itself."

Chip Denman, quoted above by Hall, makes a good point. The statement fails to define what is considered to be irrational. Most likely, what they mean by irrational is anything others believe in that doesn't fit their world view or hasn't been proven their way. Therefore, this is more a statement of bias and faith, rather than fact. If by irrational they mean unproven, then this is false too as there is strong evidence for many paranormal and psychic phenomena (See Argument # 1)

In fact, there does not seem to be any evidence of an increase in irrationality or superstition. I would challenge any skeptic to show me a mass poll where a high percentage of people admit literally that they believe in "superstition and irrationality". There probably aren't any, because most people don't label their beliefs as superstition or irrationality. It is the *skeptics* who label paranormal beliefs as such. That's an important thing to remember. Even the polls published over the years in *Skeptical Inquirer* indicate at most a shift in emphasis as one belief replaces another in the popular imagination. Moreover, to the extent that polls have been done we find church attendance dropping, and people shifting from organized religions to less formal or more individualized forms of spirituality. In the traditional religious sense, our society is more secular now than before.

It appears that on the whole irrationality, belief, and credulity are at about the same level as they have always been, just distributed in different ways. What probably is going on is that this phrase is used to describe new and expanded beliefs (i.e. New Age type beliefs) versus established beliefs in society, with the new beliefs appearing as though there is an increase.

Section II: Arguments Against Specific Paranormal Claims

Argument # 16: Psychics and mediums use cold reading tricks and general guesses, not psychic powers.

Skeptics claim that psychics and mediums use **cold reading** to pick up clues about clients and amaze them. First, let me explain what cold reading is, then I'll explain why it does not account for all psychic readings. **Cold reading** is an umbrella term for a series of techniques used by magicians and mentalists (specialists in mind reading tricks) to employ a variety of methods to gain information and clues about a client for a reading. These methods include but are not limited to: fishing for clues by asking questions, listening to everything a client says to get clues, making general or vague statements that most people interpret as hits, observing facial expressions and body language as you make statements, analyzing clues from a person's dress and demeanor, and other mentalist tricks, etc. (despite what politically correct people say, it is a fact that there are many things you can tell about a person based on their looks, even from a photograph) Even the smallest things can give a trained cold reader important clues about you. In conjunction with cold reading, another technique known as "hot reading" can also be used. **Hot reading** is the technique of investigating a person's background and records prior to a psychic reading to obtain specific information about them. Mentalists performing in stage shows often use hot reading to obtain prior information about audience members beforehand, such as maiden names, former addresses, etc. Cold reading can be used both consciously and unconsciously. Some cold readers knowingly use and develop their cold reading techniques like a skill or art. Others may subconsciously use cold reading techniques, attributing it to intuition or psychic abilities, thus deluding themselves as well as their clients.

Although it is true that there are many frauds out there who use cold reading the way mentalists and magicians do, it doesn't mean that every psychic is a fraud. That would be like finding some counterfeit money and concluding that all money was counterfeit. Magic tricks and genuine psychic abilities are two separate fields, rather than the same as skeptics like Randi would have you believe. Of course, frauds and con artists are part of every kind of business, not just in the psychic medium field. The problem with the cold reading/hot reading explanation is that for many

accounts of psychic readings (including some of my own) the techniques do not account for the specific information attained. For example, some psychic can tell you very specific things about you without asking you any questions, which rules out the “fishing for clues” technique. If neither they nor any of their accomplices talked to you beforehand, then that would also rule out the same technique. If the clues they gave could not have been gained from anything in your appearance, then that would rule out the “visual clues” technique as well. For instance, if you were told the location you grew up in, your former last name, or an event in your past that doesn’t show in your appearance, then the visual clues technique could not account for it. In addition, if the psychic who told you these things didn’t know you were coming beforehand, as in a walk-in psychic fair, then that would rule out hot reading too. Unfortunately for skeptics, there are many cases of psychic readings where all of the above were ruled out. Therefore, cold/hot reading cannot account for every case. In such cases, the skeptic is left without explanations, but often continue to insist that the client must have given away some kind of clue, and demand that this be disproved first before imposing any claim of genuine psychic ability at work. However, if it was a past event, it is impossible to prove either way unless you could travel back in time, so the skeptic has their excuse to deny once again.

Let me give some examples of psychic readings that I know of where cold reading was either impossible or too unlikely to be a valid explanation:

1) One of my own examples is from a psychic reading I got from my acting teacher’s mom about a year and a half ago. During rehearsals one time, I heard that my teacher’s mom, Pearl, did psychic readings as a personal favor to people. A fellow student mentioned that she was amazed because Pearl told her that she had a certain tragedy when she was 5 years old. Curious myself, I decided to go up and ask for a reading too just for fun to see what would happen. Up until then, none of the psychics I went to before impressed me with anything specific. And since she was not a professional psychic, I didn’t think she would have any incentive to use any fradulent cold reading tricks. Pearl agreed to it and we sat down. All she asked me for was my birth date (a common question by psychics to supposedly open up the Akashic records that contain your karmic history), then she looked at my palm for a while. She did NOT ask any leading questions or fish for clues.

To my astonishment, she said that she sensed that I had a tragic period in my life when I was 9 years old. Somehow she could feel the emotional scars there, not from my palm lines she said, but from the vibrations she felt. This was very true because that year was the worst year of my life, besides the year that I was 16. Random guessing, although possible, was unlikely because if she had guessed any other year beside 9 and 16, she would have been wrong. By guessing, she would have had a 2/25 chance of being right. Furthermore, guessing was even more unlikely since she guessed the tragic year of the girl before me correctly too. Generalized guessing was also unlikely because if Pearl had guessed the age of 5 like she did for the girl before me, it would have been wrong. The day after this occurred, I wrote an account of it on a message board post, asking the skeptics to explain this. They insisted that either cold reading or chance guessing was used.

When I mentioned that all I was asked was my birth date, they insisted that facial expressions and body language were part of cold reading too. But when I challenged them to explain how my facial expressions or body language told her that I had a tragedy at 9 years old, they had no explanation except to repeat the same thing again and dodge the question. They were stumped! What the odds that Pearl gained such hits from guessing for both me and the girl before me?

Later, when I brought this up to a skeptic, he suggested that since this occurred a year and a half ago, my memory of the events might not be accurate. However, I debunked his false memory theory on the spot by stating that I still had the message board post I wrote right after the event, which contained the SAME details that I remember now. After his case was blown, he suggested that if they were a school, they would have records of my past. When I told him that it was not an actual school, but a community theater acting class that had no records on me, (and didn't need them either) he was at a loss for explanations and challenged me to prove that I had an accurate memory of every detail that happened, including the color of the drapes, chairs, etc. and that I had a detailed transcript of the whole thing, or else I could not rule out that all other possible non-psychic explanations. This was of course ridiculous because it would be like asking someone to remember the license plate number of every car

that they drove by this morning, or what they did 257 days ago at 3:15pm, for instance. He was obviously getting desperate for explanations here and to go so far as to challenge me to prove trivial things to put the burden of proof on me. This was obviously the work of a closed and biased mind. Besides, Pearl was the kind sincere simple next door granny type and anyone who met her would laugh if they heard the claim that she was a cold reader.

2) These next two accounts were recently related to me from my dad. The first one involves a psychic that he, my mom, and her friend met a long time ago back in Taiwan (I think it was during the early 70's, before I was born) While they were passing through a city that they rarely visited, they came upon a line of people waiting for a reading from this blind psychic who gave readings based on voices he heard. My mom decided on the spur of the moment to get a reading from him. Without fishing for any clues, one of the first things that he told her was that when she was a child, her mom tried to give her away for adoption to another family, but she later ran back home, which was TRUE! My mom was very amazed at the time, and her friend was so amazed that she tried to push my mom aside to get a reading too. He also told her other things that were true too.

Now, being given away for adoption and then running back home is not a generalized guess that would fit anybody, only a few people. Both my parents and my mom's friend can confirm this story, so it's not like it was made up out of obscurity. Furthermore, since this reading was on the spot and not prearranged, there was no possibility of hot reading or background checking. And since this was in a city where she rarely visited, there wouldn't have been people who knew her there that could have told the psychic about her beforehand. The skeptics I related this to tried to claim that since this occurred decades ago, the memories of the three people involved can't be counted on to be reliable. However, as mentioned in the rebuttal to Argument # 6, since this was a shocking event, the memory of it is the same it was at the time it happened (as in my own example above). Furthermore, since these type of amazing psychic readings already occur in modern times anyway, why couldn't they have occurred back then as well?

3) Here's the second story that happened more recently. A few years ago, my dad and a coworker, Eileen, went to a psychic fair. They

picked one of the psychics there for a reading and sat down. Immediately the psychic told Eileen that “You are in the process of moving” which was true because Eileen had already sold her house and was in fact in the process of moving. Struck with amazement, they arranged for a personal reading later on with the psychic. Skeptics I told this to claimed that the phrase “You are in the process of moving” was vague and could be interpreted in many ways related to changes in life. However, whenever I’ve heard that phrase used, it usually referred to moving residence. In either case, even if it was a general phrase, that still doesn’t mean that it was just a guess.

4) This case I heard on my email discussion list is a very extraordinary one. Edith, whom has a history of giving good spiritual advice, related this story:

> “I went to a Psychic fair in Chicago, all by myself, on the spur of the moment, then looked around and saw a little old man sitting all by himself, a bit away from all others. I walked over to him, asked him how much he charges, and sat down. He did not even ask my birth date or any other question, and began to talk about my children.
>
> He said I had two children, a boy and a girl. I told him that this is not true, that I have two girls. He said that he knows different, which really upset me. He went on saying that the boy died right after his birth, and that my girl had died a few years back in a tragic incident, and that the second girl is not my own girl, but is adopted. He was right, because I had to admit that I no longer thought of my little boy any longer as a son.
> *(he was born 37 years earlier, prematurely in the 6th month of pregnancy, and had only lived 25 minutes.)*
>
> He then told me that I am writing a Novel, and began to outline the story, naming the character in the Novel by name, their roles, and how they related to each other, and the time frame of the story. He was right in the smallest detail, better than I could describe myself, having written it.
>
> He told me that I would be teaching many people, and that people will come to my house to ask for lessons, but it would be out of the State, in the South.

(The South was the last place on earth I would want to live at that time. Neither would I want to leave my job, or my dream house that I had purchased only a short time before. It was months later that my husband was suddenly transferred to Georgia. Here I had an Art exhibition in Atlanta, and people had approached me to teach Art, especially oil painting.)

There were many other events he told me from my childhood, early adulthood, my former marriage, all accurate in every aspect and every little detail. He described the house I was born in, a house I had never again seen in over 46 years, and I had to look on an old photograph to check the details he described, of which I was no longer aware of.
He was correct. He took a pen and wrote my father's name, in my father's handwriting. *(The old German script, which is no longer in use, called: Hohe Stolze.)*

Now, I don't expect you to believe me, and I don't care one way or another, whatever explanation you come up with for all that, it does not change one tittle.

Just remember one thing: I had never been in Chicago before, other than driving through. Chicago was 45 miles from where I lived, and I knew NO ONE in that city, nor did anyone know that I would be going to Chicago that day, and I had no idea that there was a Psychic Fair to begin with, but rather stumbled on it in one of the Malls.
But most of all, that it was I who chose this particular Psychic among all others.

I had been to other Psychics, at different times, in different States and different countries, all without appointments, and without recommendations by anyone I knew, who had been most accurate in everything they said, three of which described the same Novel I spoke of earlier, one spoke of a book I had written many years earlier, even how many pages the manuscript was, how many chapters, and the general contents of it."

5) Besides using professional human psychics, one can use divination to obtain information from beyond the 5 senses, as in this case:

“I was indirectly at a Ouija board sitting once when was 11 years old without any doubt it predicted the future accurately of myself my sisters and my brother. It spelled out whom we would marry and at what age and in what order. Even how many kids we would each have? I was extremely good at remembering all the information, as it was not the sort of thing we ever did as a family and it intrigued me. Of course did not realise how profound that experience was and how it has made me question all sorts of theories and concepts. I did not dwell on it too much at the time not really thinking there could be any truth in it. In my twenties we tried for the third baby and found had developed endometriosis had an emergency hysterectomy. I didn't believe it at all would never have 3 kids and recall thinking when I was 11 how sad it felt, as would only have two kids and the rest of my sisters and my brother would have more than me? They had what it predicted? The information it gave was accurate.

The things happened in the order it stated.ie. I got married when it said and before my sister who was a year older than me. Which at the time I joked about most eleven-year-old girls just automatically think an older sister will marry before them? I also recall its predicted I would marry just before my 22nd birthday that happened. It stated our future husbands surnames? (No it’s not false memory syndrome or us deliberately searching out folk with those names (believe me have gone through a long list of 'how's & why's and where's and when?)

Believe me was too busy working to give it too much thought to any of it and RING is not by any means a common surname. (Neither is 'Ashby' my sister’s surname.) At the time I thought RING when asked about whom I would marry was referring to a 'ring' as one being placed in marriage on the finger never realising until years later after was married sometime that it predicted my future name? I even recall it predicting my sisters future surnames now I am sure we all lead far to busy lives to be subliminally searching for names mentioned? The sequence of events date’s surnames the order of events actually occurred as it stated? There's a lot of things have thought about here 'where did that information come from'? Did we ourselves produce it and how? It predicted my brother would be shot (we asked where? It said 'trunk') that is the only thing that’s not transpired to date.

> If it does occur I won't panic as it stated he would not die.
> This is one of many very strange things that have experienced. If the information was correct for one of us then
> perhaps it could have been coincidence or subliminal brain - consciousness processes in operation? Who knows?
> The fact (and it is fact sorry you have to take my word for that) (if you can't then 'postulate' the concept for a moment
> and try to focus on explanations?
> We only ever did this once it was not a usual occurrence (hence why was so intrigued). I must admit
> Have no intention of ever doing it again either.
> I very cheekily asked (being poor as you do) when would we win the Football Pools and it just kept going to XXXXXXX
> although I did not count them so am lost as to that particular answer? This occurred in 1974 and it has since made me question many things.
> This is one of many experiences that have kept me focused on gathering answers that could possibly account for
> how these things occur? It's most interesting."

As you can see, the facts in these incidents don't suggest in any way that cold/hot reading was involved. Psychic reading accounts like this are abundant and come from people of all walks of life. Anyone who does a little research could come up with accounts like these.

In 2000, famous mediums were tested under controlled conditions by Dr. Gary Schwartz of the *Human Energy Systems Laboratory* at the University of Arizona, which revealed some astonishing results. The experiments involved a group of mediums and sitters who were not told each other's identities beforehand. Separated by a cloth screen, the mediums were only allowed to ask a few yes or no questions before giving their readings. Their readings turned out to average between a 70 to 90 percent accuracy rate, far above the chance level of 33 percent! The odds of this happening by chance, according to Dr. Schwartz, were one in trillions!

Even more astonishing, in the second experiment involving a different group of mediums and sitters, the mediums were not allowed to ask anything at all, yet they STILL retained the same level of accuracy as the mediums in the first experiment! A report on these experiments was

published in the January 2001 issue of the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*. The report, *Accuracy and Replicability of Anomalous After-Death Communication Across Highly Skilled Mediums* contains the following key excerpts:

> “In a replication and extension experiment, medium’s average accuracy an initial ten minute period that did not allow yes-no questioning was 77%."
>
> "The data suggest that highly skilled mediums are able to obtain accurate (p less than one in ten million) and replicable information. Since factors of fraud, error, and statistical coincidence can not explain the present findings, other possible mechanisms should be considered in future research. These include telepathy, super psi, and survival of consciousness after-death."
>
> "It can be seen that the mediums varied in the number of total items they obtained and the number of questions they asked. Medium 1, in particular, generated over 130 specific pieces of information yet asked only 5 questions, 4 of which (80%) were answered yes."
>
> "Medium 1, who obtained the lowest score (80%), only asked a total of five questions. Hence, it is impossible to claim that medium 1’s percent accuracy ratings (see below) were due to "cold reading" and "fishing for information.""
>
> "Though names were rated least accurately, the magnitude of the accuracy was still surprisingly high (67% for sitter one and 76% for sitter two). Initials received higher percent accuracy scores (90% for sitter one and 100% for sitter two). Personal temperament information was very accurately reported (95% for sitter one and 93% for sitter two)."
>
> "For the first ten minutes, the mediums were instructed to receive whatever information they could about the deceased and share this information out loud. They were not allowed to ask any questions of the sitters. The sitters were instructed to remain silent... The content of these two readings was dramatic. Information about the deceased son and dog were again replicated by both mediums. However, both mediums also received information about the

recently deceased husband. Medium 2 reported being confused, saying "I keep hearing Michael times two, Michael times two." The father's name was Michael, the son's name was Michael, Jr."

"The two right bars display the percent + accuracy ratings for the silent and questioning periods, combining the data for mediums 1 and 2. The average accuracy for the silent periods was 77% and for the questioning period, 85%. The total number of items received during the silent period was 64, the total during the questioning period was 157. The difference between the silent and questioning periods in percent accuracy was not statistically significant."

"The accuracy of mediums 1 and 2 was replicated, including during a ten minute silent period when no questioning was allowed. New information about the deceased husband was received by both mediums. More information was obtained during the questioning period than the silent period, and the accuracy ratings were somewhat higher. However, detailed information was obtained during the silent periods when no "cold reading" was possible."

"These two experiments provide quantitative data that are consistent with the hypothesis that some form of anomalous information retrieval was occurring in these skilled mediums. Traditional hypotheses of fraud, subtle cueing, and statistical coincidence, are improbable explanations of the total set of observations reported here."

"The present findings do not speak directly to the mechanism (s) of anomalous information retrieval observed. However, the apparent desynchrony of the medium's ECG's with the sitter's ECG during the reading periods compared to the baseline periods is inconsistent with a "telepathy with the sitter" interpretation of the findings."

"...However, it is important to mention that the mediums spoke remarkably quickly and generated a surprisingly large number of specific facts."

"For the first sitter, all five mediums obtained information about a deceased son. Three of the five mediums heard the initial M for the son, one said the name Michael. None gave a false initial or name

for the son. Also, none obtained information about a deceased daughter (her son did die, her daughter was alive)."

"Qualitative Example II: Receiving accurate information days before the readings

One of the mediums purportedly received communication from the deceased mother of one of the sitters a few days before traveling to Tucson. The mother purportedly conveyed to the medium a favorite prayer that she had regularly recited to her daughter as a child. Moreover, according to the deceased mother, the daughter was secretly continuing to offer this prayer for her. An assistant to the medium was instructed to locate the prayer, have it laminated, and gift wrapped.

When the reading was about to begin with the sitter, the medium unexpectedly reported to the experimenters that he had forgotten to bring into the laboratory a present he had brought for this sitter from her deceased mother. Surprised by the claim of such a gift, we instructed the medium that he could have his assistant bring it in after the reading had officially ended and the formal data had been collected.

The gift was brought into the laboratory at the end of the session and passed around the screen to the sitter. Upon opening the present, the sitter, in tears, confirmed that this was a special prayer her mother had taught her as a child. Moreover, she shared that she silently continued to say this prayer for her deceased mother.

Since the medium purportedly did not know who the sitters were ahead of time, and also did not know who was behind the screen, the observation of the medium receiving anomalous communication three days before the experiment and giving this particular sitter this particular gift raises challenging questions..."

Since they were published in the Jan 2001 issue of Journal of Parapsychology, more experiments have been done and can now be read about in Dr. Schwartz's book *The Afterlife Experiments : Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death.*

Argument # 17: Experiments that show positive results for psi must be replicable to count as evidence.

Corollary: "I won't consider successful psi experiments as evidence of psi unless the results are replicated and peer reviewed."

Besides claiming lack of controls, pseudoskeptics also demand psi experiments to be replicable to count as evidence. While this standard may seem reasonable scientifically, it is usually just another tactic to try to raise the bar, because no matter how many times a successful psi experiment is replicated, they still will demand a never-ending higher rate of replication. (If the 2,549 sessions of the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments from 1974 to 1997 by different research laboratories which produced above chance results doesn't count as replicable, then what would?) This is because these guys are all about arguing and playing hopscotch games. No matter what, they never concede that they are wrong, and will use every slimy tactic they can find to deny what they don't believe in. If cornered, they will change the topic or rant about something irrelevant. That's just the way they are.

The first problem with this argument is that just because something hasn't been replicated doesn't mean that it didn't happen. For example, if an Olympic Track and Field runner breaks a world record, and other athletes don't repeat it, it doesn't mean that it never happened. Likewise, if I won a slot machine jackpot or threw a quarter that landed on its edge (against astronomical odds), but I wasn't able to repeat it, it doesn't mean that it never happened the first time. Similarly, phenomena such as supernovas, balls of lightning, and comets are outer phenomena not replicable under our control but are acknowledged to exist anyway. Therefore, replicating the appearance of UFO's or ghosts may not be possible because they are out of our control, but that doesn't mean they never happen or don't exist. All it would take is one genuine case of a UFO or ghost to prove that they were real and possible. As an unnamed law says: "If it happens once, then it is possible."

In fact, the very nature of psychic phenomena makes them not easy to replicate. Dean Radin, Ph.D, Director of the Consciousness Research Laboratory at the University of Nevada, and author of *The Conscious*

Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena, lists 8 reasons why this is so: (page 40)

> "Psi effects do not fall into the class of easily replicated effects. There are eight typical reasons why replication is difficult to achieve: (1) the phenomenon may not be replicable; (2) the written experimental procedures may be incomplete, or the skills needed to perform the replication may not be well understood; (3) the effect under study may change over time or react to the experimental procedure; (4) investigators may inadvertently affect the results of their experiments; (5) experiments sometimes fail for sociological reasons; (6) there are psychological reasons that prevent replications from being easy to conduct; (7) the statistical aspects of replication are much more confusing than more people think; and (78) complications in experimental design affect some replications."

The second problem with this argument is that successful psi experiments definitely *have* been replicated by different researchers and laboratories. One famous solid example is the series of telepathy studies known as the Ganzfeld experiments, in which subjects guess target images while sitting with ping pong ball halves over their eyes and listening to relaxing white noise designed to deprive them of sensory stimuli to heighten their intuition and psychic abilities. These have been replicated for decades. Dean Radin, in the same book quoted above describes the replicability of the Ganzfeld experiments: (page 78-79)

> "At the annual convention of the Parapsychological Association in 1982, Charles Honorton presented a paper summarizing the results of all known ganzfeld experiments to that date. He concluded that the experiments at that time provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the existence of psi in the ganzfeld…
>
> At that time, ganzfeld experiments had appeared in thirty-four published reports by ten different researchers. These reports described a total of forty-two separate experiments. Of these, twenty-eight reported the actual hit rates that were obtained. The other studies simply declared the experiments successful or unsuccessful. Since this information is insufficient for conducting a numerically oriented meta-analysis, Hyman and Honorton concentrated their analyses on the twenty-either studies that had

> reported actual hit rates. Of those twenty-eight, twenty-three had resulted in hit rates greater than chance expectation. This was an instant indicator that some degree of replication had been achieved, but when the actual hit rates of all twenty-eight studies were combined, the results were even more astounding than Hyman and Honorton had expected: odds against chance of ten billion to one. Clearly, the overall results were not just a fluke, and both researchers immediately agreed that *something* interesting was going on. But was it telepathy?"

Radin further elaborates on how researcher Charles Honorton tested whether independent replications had actually been achieved: (page 79)

> "To address the concern about whether independent replications had been achieved, Honorton calculated the experimental outcomes for each laboratory separately. Significantly positive outcomes were reported by six of the ten labs, and the combined score across the ten laboratories still resulted in odds against chance of about a billion to one. This showed that no one lab was responsible for the positive results; they appeared across-the-board, even from labs reporting only a few experiments. To examine further the possibility that the two most prolific labs were responsible for the strong odds against chance, Honorton recalculated the results after excluding the studies that he and Sargent had reported. The resulting odds against chance were still ten thousand to one. Thus, the effect did not depend on just one or two labs; it had been successfully replicated by eight other laboratories."

On the same page, he then soundly dismisses the skeptical claim that the file-drawer effect (selective reporting) could skew the meta-analysis results in favor of psi: (page 79-80)

> "Another factor that might account for the overall success of the ganzfeld studies was the editorial policy of professional journals, which tends to favor the publication of successful rather than unsuccessful studies. This is the "file-drawer" effect mentioned earlier. Parapsychologists were among the first to become sensitive to this problem, which affects all experimental domains. In 1975 the Parapsychological Association's officers adopted a policy opposing the selective reporting of positive outcomes. As a result, both

positive and negative findings have been reported atg the Paraspsychological Association's annual meetings and in its affiliated publications for over two decades.

Furthermore, a 1980 survey of parapsychologists by the skeptical British psychologist Susan Blackmore had confirmed that the file-drawer problem was not a serious issue for the ganzfeld meta-analysis. Blackmore uncovered nineteen complete but unpublished ganzfeld studies. Of those nineteen, seven were independently successful with odds against chance of twenty to one or greater. Thus while some ganzfeld studies had not been published, Hyman and Honorton agreed that selective reporting was not an important issue in this database.

Still, because it is impossible to know how many other studies might have been in file drawers, it is common in meta-analyses to calculate how many unreported studies would be required to nullify the observed effects among the known studies. For the twenty-eight direct-hit ganzfeld studies, this figure was 423 file-drawer experiments, a ratio of unreported-to-reported studies of approximately fifteen to one. Given the time and resources it takes to conduct a single ganzfeld session, let alone 423 hypotheitcal unrepoted experiments, it is not surprising that Hyman agreed with Honorton that the file-drawer issue could not plausibly account for the overall results of the psi ganzfeld database. There were simply not enough experimenters around to have conducted those 423 studies.

Thus far, the proponent and the skeptic had agreed that the results could not be attributed to chance or to selective reporting practices."

Another skeptical argument against the ganzfeld studies is sensory leakage. Radin addresses this as well: (page 81-82)

"Because the ganzfeld procedure uses a sensory-isolation environment, the possibility of sensory leakage during the telepathic "sending" portion of the session is already significantly diminished. After the sending period, however, when the receiver is attempting to match his or her experience to the correct target, if the experimenter interacting wit the receiver knows the identity of the

> target, he or she could inadvertently bias the receiver's ratings. One study in the ganzfeld database contained this potentially fatal flaw, but rather than showing a wildly successful result, that study's participants actually performed slightly *below* chance expectation…
>
> Despite variations in study quality due to these and other factors, Hyman and Honorton both concluded that there was no systematic relationship between the security methods used to guard against sensory leakage and the study outcomes. Honorton proved his point by recalculating the overall results only for studies that had used duplicate target sets. He found that the results were still quite strong, with odds against chance of about 100,000 to 1."

Where skeptic Ray Hyman disagreed with Charles Honorton was in the role of randomization flaws affecting the ganzfeld results. However, as Radin points out, the consensus of the experts on meta-analysis is against Hyman's hypothesis: (page 82-83)

> "A similar concern arises for the method of randomizing the sequence in which the experimenter presents the target and the three decoys to the receiver during the judging process. If, for example, the target is always presented second in the sequence of four, then again, a subject may tell a friend, and the friend, armed with knowledge about which of the four targets Is the real one, could successfully select the real target without the use of psi.
>
> Although these scenarios are implausible, skeptics have always insisted on nailing down even the most unlikely hypothetical flaws. And it was on this issue, the importance of randomization flaws, that Hyman and Honorton disagreed. Hyman claimed that he saw a significant relationship between randomization flaws and study outcomes, and Honorton did not. The sources of this disagreement can be traced to Honorton's and Hyman's differing definitions of "randomization flaws," to how the two analysts rated these flaws in the individual studies, and to how they statistically treated the quality ratings.
>
> These sorts of complicated disagreements are not unexpected given the diametrically opposed conviction with which Hnorton and Hyman began their analyses. When such discrepancies arise, it is

> useful to consider the opinions of outside reviewers who have the technical skills to assess the disagreements. In this case, ten psychologists and statisticians supplied commentaries alongside the Honorton-Hyman published debate that appeared in 1986. None of the commentators agreed with Hyman, while two statisticians and two psychologists not previously associated with this debate explicitly agreed with Honorton.
>
> In two separate analyses conducted later, Harvard University behavioral scientists Monica Harris and Robert Rosenthal (the latter a world-renowned expert in methodology and meta-analysis) used Hyman's own flaw ratings and failed to find any significant relationships between the supposed flaws and te study outcomes. They wrote, "Our analysis of the effects of flaws on study outcome lends no support to the hypothesis that ganzfeld research results are a significant function of the set of flaw variables.
>
> In other words, everyone agreed that the ganzfeld results were not due to chance, nor to selective reporting, nor to sensory leakage. And everyone, except one confirmed skeptic, also agreed that the results were not plausibly due to flaws in randomization procedures. The debate was now poised to take the climactic step from Stage 1, "It's impossible," to Stage 2, "Okay, so maybe it's real."

Even after the successful replicable series of ganzfeld experiments, further replicability was found in the computer-controlled autoganzfeld experiments, designed to be even more efficient and controlled than the original ganzfeld experiments (although not shown to be significant as mentioned above). This time though, two magicians who specialized in mentalism were brought in to check the protocals for cheating loopholes, as Radin describes: (page 86)

> "In addition, two professional magicians who specialized in the simulation of psi effects (called "mentalists" or "psychic entertainers") examined the autoganzeld system and protocols to see if it was vulnerable to mentalist tricks or conjuring-type deceptions. One of the magicians was Ford Kross, an officer of the Psychic Entertainers Association. Kross provided the following written statement about the autoganzfeld setup:

> *"In my professional capacity as a mentalist, I have reviewed Psychophysical Research Laboratories' automated ganzfeld system and found it to be provide excellent security against deception by subjects"*
>
> The other magician was Cornell University psyhcologist Daryl Bem, who besides coauthoring a 19954 paper on the ganzfeld psi experiments with Honorton, is also a professional mentalist and a member of the Psychic Entertainers Association."

Radin summarizes the results of the autoganzfeld experiments as follows: (page 86)

> "The bottom line for the eleven series, consisting of a total of 354 sessions, was 122 direct hits, for a 34 percent hit rate. This compares favorably with the 1985 meta-analysis hit rate of 37 percent. Honorton's autoganzfeld results overall produced odds against chance of forty-five thousand to one."

Further replications beyond the ganzfeld and autoganzfeld experiments include the following: (page 87-88)

> "The next replications were reported by psychologist Kathy Dalton and her colleagues at the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. The Edinburgh experiments, conducted from 1993 through 1996 (and still ongoing), consisted of five published reports and 289 sessions using an improved, fullyl automated psi ganzfeld setup. It was based on Honorton's original autoganzfeld design and implemented in stages first by Honorton, then by psychologist Robin Taylor, then by me, and finally by Kathy Dalton. Other replications have been reported by Professor Dick Bierman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam; Professor Daryl Bem of Cornell University's Psychology Department; Dr. Richard Broughton and colleagues at the Rhine Research Center in Durham, North Carolina; Professor Adrian Parker and colleagues at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and doctoral student Rens Wezelman from the Institute for Parapsychology in Utrecht, Netherlands.

> While only the 1985 meta-analysis, the autoganzfeld study, and the Edinburgh study independently produced a hit rate with 95 percent confidence intervals beyond chance expectation, it is noteworthy that each of the six replication studies (after the autoganzfeld) resulted in point estimates greater than chance. The 95 percent confidence interval at the right end of the graph ois the combined estimate based on all available ganzfeld sessions, consisting of a total of 2,549 sessions. The overall hit rate of 33.2 percent is unlikely with odds against chance beyond a million billion to one."

Finally, at the end of the chapter, Radin concludes what the findings of the ganzfeld experiments and others before it suggest: (page 88)

> "Now jointly consider the results of the ganzfeld psi experiments, the dream-telepathy experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, the ESP cards tests from the 1880s to the 1940s, Upton Sinclair's experiments in 1929, and earlier studies on thought transference. The same effects have been repeated again and again, by new generations of experimenters, using increasingly rigorous methods. From the beginning, each new series of telepathy experiments was met with its share of skeptical attacks. These criticisms reduced mainstream scientific interest in the reported effects, but ironically they also refined the methods used in future experiments to the point that today's ganzfeld experiments stump the experts."

Thus from all this, it is indisputable that we have solid scientific and statistical evidence that one of the most successful and controlled series of telepathy experiments in history, the Ganzfeld experiments, were definitely replicable. Therefore, the skeptical challenge has been met, and it's up to them to accept the obvious data or reject it. Radin's book describes many other replicable psi experiments as well, including ESP, clairvoyance, remote viewing, and psychokinesis. So I highly recommend it. For more details about the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments, see the following detailed articles which can be viewed online:

http://dbem.ws/ganzfeld.html

http://www.tcm.phy.cam.ac.uk/~bdj10/psi/delanoy/node2.html

Argument # 18: No psychic phenomena has been demonstrated under controlled conditions.

Corollary: "Whenever proper controls are put in place, psi experiments only get chance results."

This is another dogmatic belief by pseudoskeptics that is not based on facts, but on an *a priori* belief that psi is impossible and that only inadequate controls and sloppy methods can result in above chance psi results. Thus, any experiment that supports psi is automatically assumed by them to be uncontrolled, while any that fail is considered to be adequately controlled. However, this is simply not so because as mentioned in Argument # 17 above, the successful Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments were controlled. For an in-depth description of the controls used, see the following articles.

http://www.psychicscience.org/papganz.aspx

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/whoswho/ganzfeld.htm

Dean Radin's books *The Conscious Universe* and *Entangled Minds* makes a solid case for the validity of such experiments.

Furthermore, honest independent researchers have also verified the reality and measurable effect of psychic phenomena. One example is Darryl Sloan, a balanced freethinker with a large YouTube following. In his channel at http://www.youtube.com/darrylsloan you will see many videos of his psi wheel experiments which demonstrate authentic telekinesis not explainable by any conventional explanations. Sloan has taken great care in them to make sure that his experiments are controlled (in sealed containers and at a distance). In his videos you will see a slight (not sensational) but real and measurable effect, as well as his observations, musings and speculations. He seems to be a real truth seeker that follows the evidence and changes his views in accord with it, asking questions, and admitting when he doesn't know something, all of which are hallmarks of a genuine objective researcher. Sloan himself has always said in his psi experiments that the best proof one can obtain is by doing the experiments on their own. That is the best way you can prove

psi to yourself, without having to take on faith what someone else tells you or has done.

Pseudoskeptics will say that an experiment was uncontrolled even when they were never at the location of the experiment. This happened with the SRI (Stanford Research Institute) experiments on famous psychic Uri Geller, which was published in the scientific journal *Nature* in 1974. Psychic debunker James Randi (Geller's nemesis) and other skeptics who were not at SRI when Geller was tested, made a bunch of accusations against SRI such as poor controls and deliberate skewing of the results on the part of the scientists there, Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ. But since Randi and his skeptics were never there, all they have is speculation based on their closed beliefs. Randi has no explanation for Geller's success in some of the experiments such as guessing the exact number of the roll of a die in a cup 8 times in a row, or finding the cup with water or metal in it out of a series of cups. All he can say is that Puthoff and Targ are not magicians and do not know how to detect magic tricks. (Though suffice to say, Randi is not qualified as a scientist in any way, while Puthoff and Targ are) And of course, he charges SRI and Geller with clumsy inadequate controls or fraud, which are merely blanket statements from him cause he has no concrete evidence or explanations.

Harold Puthoff of SRI told me in email exchanges regarding these Randi charges:

> Puthoff:
> "Not true at all. They just quote Randi and his pronouncements, e.g., in his book Flim Flam. In Flim Flam, he gives something like 28 debunking points, if my memory serves me correctly. I had the opportunity to confront Randi at a Parapsychology Association conference with proof in hand, and in tape-recorded interaction he admitted he was wrong on all the points. He even said he would correct them for the upcoming paperback being published by the CSICOP group. (He did not.)
>
> In case one thinks that it was just a case of our opinions vs. his opinions, we chose for the list of incorrect points only those that could be independently verified. Examples: He said that in our Nature paper we verified Geller's metal-bending. Go to the paper, and you see that we said we were not able to obtain evidence for

> this. He said that a film of the Geller experiment made at SRI by famed photographer Zev Pressman was not made by him, but by us and we just put his name on it. We showed up with an affidavit by Pressman saying that indeed he did make the film. Etc., etc."
>
> "Geller did the same kind of remote viewing in our lab, that more than fifty others from the government and army have done as part of the 25 year remote viewing program. If the whole world has remote viewing abilities, why shouldn't Geller have some?"
>
> "Again, these claims of inadequate controls are generally just repeats of what Randi says. The truth of the matter is that none of Randi's claimed suspected inadequate controls actually had anything to do with the experiments, which of course Randi was not there to know of. This has been independently reported by Scott Rogo somewhere in the literature, who came out specifically to check each of Randi's guesses about inadequate controls and found them inapplicable under the conditions in which the tests were conducted. In fact, all of Randi's suggestions were amateurish compared to the sophisticated steps we took, suspecting as we did everything from magician's tricks to an Israeli intelligence scam."

As of now, you can watch the SRI documented videos of the Geller experiments on YouTube and verify for yourself that they are real. Here are the links to them. They are very convincing and remain undebunked.

Part 1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_I3vs539So

Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhayXL04WZU

Part 3: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiO0qztBuz4

During the course of his career, Uri Geller succeeded in 17 controlled experiments in different laboratories. Here are some quotes from the scientists who tested him. Notice the bold emphasis on the controls and strict conditions of the experiments.

> "I tested Uri Geller myself under **laboratory-controlled conditions** and saw with my own eyes the bending of a key which was not touched by Geller at any time. There was a group of people present

during the experiment who all witnessed the key bending in eleven seconds to an angle of thirty degrees. Afterwards we tested the key in a scientific laboratory using devices such as electron microscopes and X-rays and found that there was no chemical, manual or mechanical forces involved in the bending of the key."

Professor Helmut Hoffmann (Department of Electrical Engineering, Technical University of Vienna, Austria)

"Through intense concentration, Uri was able to bend a 3/8" cold rolled steel bar under **controlled conditions**, as he rubbed the top of it with his forefinger. I was sitting very close to him during this experiment. On another occasion, a radish seed sprouted and grew 1/2" as he held it in his hand. I watched this very closely as well. "

Jean Millay PhD. (Saybrook Institute U.S.A.)

"Uri Geller was tested in my laboratory at UCLA. During the experiments in Kirlian photography and after hundreds of trials, he produced three extraordinary photographs in which flashes of energy were clearly visible. What wonderfully welcome sights they were! I have also tested Uri's watch-fixing and metal-bending abilities. He has demonstrated these to me under **controlled scientific conditions**, in a most convincing manner".

Dr. Thelma Moss (Professor of psychology at UCLA and one of the first
U.S. researchers to experiment with Kirlian photography - U.S.A.)

"Uri bent a strong heat-treated alloy bar held by myself and my assistant at each end. There was absolutely no pressure exerted by Uri while the bar was bending. All the **controlled experiments** I conducted with Uri Geller have been described in Sciences et Avenir, No. 345, pp. 1108-1113."

Professor Charles Crussard (Professor of Metallurgy, School of Mines,

Paris, and Scientific Director of Pecheney, France)

"Uri Geller, as a psychic genius, has been able to demonstrate the repeatability of **controlled scientific psychic experiments**. Thereby he has proved the reality of psychic phenomena (such as telekinesis, clairvoyance and telepathy)."

Professor P. Plum, MD (Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, University of
Copenhagen, former chairman of the Danish Medical Research Council -
Denmark)

"We have observed certain phenomena with the subjects [including Uri Geller] for which we have no scientific explanation. As a result of Geller's success in this experimental period, we consider that he has demonstrated his paranormal, perceptual ability in a convincing and unambiguous manner." (The results of these experiments were published in the respected British journal Nature, Vol. 251, No. 5).
Dr Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ (Stanford Research Institute - California, U.S.A.)

"Laser physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff of Menlo Park's Stanford Research Institute admit their kind of research invites chicanery and trickery. They have taken special precautions, they said, to conduct the Stanford Research experiments under **doubly strict laboratory conditions**."

"Under these conditions, they said, no magician has been able to duplicate through trickery the psychic feat performed by Uri Geller and others. Some won't even try."

Los Angeles Times, Monday July 28, 1975

"I have personally witnessed and experienced on two occasions the metal bending abilities of Uri Geller. These experiments were conducted under **rigorous laboratory conditions**. In these two

> experiments the thick steel rod I was holding and observing carefully bent, and continued to bend, in my own hand. One rod bent to 90 degrees during a period of approximately six minutes while I was holding it. The other steel rod bent after Uri Geller stroked it and continued bending on a glass table without anyone touching it. The steel rods were provided by myself. I consider the Geller effect to be a phenomena which should be studied seriously by science. "
>
> "A scientist would have to be either massively ignorant or a confirmed bigot to deny the evidence that the human mind can make connection with space, time and matter in ways which have nothing to do with the ordinary senses. Further, he cannot deny that these connections are compatible with current thinking in physics, and may in the future become accepted as a part of an extended science in which the description 'paranormal' no longer applies, and can be replaced by 'normal'."
>
> Dr. Kit Pedler, (Head of the Electron Microscopy department, University of London:)

As you can see, the testimony of experts who tested Geller appears convincing indeed. Besides, the failed psi experiments often cited by skeptics are almost always done by skeptics and debunkers themselves. (Gee, how unbiased is that?) The results of real scientists, fortunately, are not so one-sided as skeptics would have you believe.

For more impressive quotes by scientists regarding Uri Geller, see these links:

Quotes from scientists:

http://www.uri-geller.com/uri-biography/uribiog3.htm

As you can see, Randi's long time claim that no scientist considers Uri Geller to be psychic is flat out wrong. The evidence in these quotes is impressive.

Randi also claimed in a Town Meeting speech that no magician considers Geller to be real, which was again flat out wrong. Have a look at these

quotes from some of the top magicians of the world, including David Blaine and David Ben.

http://www.uri-geller.com/uri-biography/uribiog4.htm

"Uri bent a spoon for me, the first time he did it, I thought there must be a trick. The second time I was stunned, completely, completely stunnedand amazed. It just bent in my hand. I've never seen anything like it. It takes a lot to impress me. Uri Geller is for real and anyone who doesn't recognise that is either deluding himself, or is a very sad person."
David Blain, (American Magician. Star of ABC's Television Specials.)

"I immediately pick up the spoon from the lectern and place it into my pocket so that no one can steal it before I have the opportunity to auction it off. I notice that it is now at a perfect 90-degree angle - a different physical appearance than what I recall seeing when he placed it gently down on the lectern. I secretly shake my head because it is now different and I did not see him do one thing that was suspicious, with speed, without grace or charm. It was flawless. I have no idea what he did. I now have the spoon at my home. It is perfect. I have seen many spoons bent by so called experts. Uri is in a league of his own. The curvature of the bend is beautiful - not forced. I have said to many people that the curvature reminds me of a single line drawn by Matisse. It is a work of art. You can tell that it was created by a master. Quite wonderful. I'm a fan. Now, I would like to add a few further comments. Although I am not an expert in the paranormal, I am an expert in sleight of hand. I would stack up my knowledge and ability in sleight of hand against anyone in the world. I do not believe that Geller used sleight of hand to bend the spoon. (I have seen most of the spoon bending experts created by the magic community and their work is not very elegant when compared with Geller.)"
David Ben Sleight of Hand Master
http://www.theconjuror.com/

"As a magician, I believe that the tests we did (with Geller) could not

be duplicated in any way by a magician's methods."
Abb Dickson (Professional magician - U.S.A. and President of the International Brotherhood of Magicians 1997-9
Abb Dickson has been named as a new director of the World Alliance of Magicians (WAM). Dickson who is a Past President of the International Brotherhood of Magicians wants WAM to help maintain the secrecy of magic and prevent exposure to the public.

Drew McAdam
"I will say only this: I have seen Uri do things that, even as a mentalist and amateur conjuror of some 30 years, I cannot explain. I know how mind-magicians obtain the effects they do... I know the illusionist's mechanics of producing so-called psychic effects that look incredibly convincing to the layman. However, I can categorically say that Uri Geller uses none of these methods. Quite simply, the man is a phenomenon."

"Many of the top Mentalists in the world have no idea how Uri Geller can make a compass needle move.

Since he does so in his bathing suit and has been checked over by ultra sensitive equipment for metal or magnetic radiation, he obviously is NOT using a hidden magnet to move the compass needle.

Since reliable sources (and knowledgeable magicians) have not only witnessed Geller make spoons bend but have witnessed them to continue moving long after Mr. Geller has left, I would challenge these so called protectors and magic geniuses to explain how he does it.

If they reply, "I don't know for sure" then they have no right to say that he is a fake."

(Even David Copperfield is unsure about whether Uri Geller is real or not, contrary to Randi's claim that all reputable magicians think that Geller is a fraud.)

> "You know, I like Uri Geller. He is a good guy. I think he made many things with his abilities. I think some of the things he shows are illusion. But I cannot claim for sure, that this applies to everything."
>
> David Copperfield

Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, a distinguished biologist and author, has also conducted noteworthy telepathy experiments that have confirmed the existence of ESP. In his books, such as *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home* and *The Sense of Being Stared At*, he has documented telepathic experiments involving animals knowing in advance when their owners were coming home, and humans who were able to demonstrate consistent above chance that they could sense when they were being stared at. His findings were so airtight and irrefutable in fact, that arch debunker James Randi could do nothing but use cheap ad hominem attacks on him and his research.

Dr. Sheldrake believes that a “morphic resonance field” exists between humans and animals, which account for the existence of telepathy. You can learn more about Dr. Sheldrake’s research and books on his website at: http://www.sheldrake.org

Even the Neuroscientist Dr. Michael Persinger of Ontario University, hailed by pseudoskeptics for his “God helmet” experiments that seem to debunk NDE’s being evidence of an afterlife, has announced the existence of telepathy to be an established proven fact. His controlled experiments involving two subjects in separate rooms reacting to stimuli at the same time has produced confirmatory results. Dr. Persinger says that all we know for sure is that thoughts are somehow capable of traveling outside of the mind through space and matter, but we don’t know how or why. He speculates that the Earth has some kind of magnetic field, which animals, fish and bird flocks use as a guidance system - that somehow human consciousness may be linked to.

Here is an interview with Dr. Persinger on Skeptiko:

http://www.skeptiko.com/michael-persinger-discovers-telepathic-link/

Here is a video of a public presentation by Dr. Persinger where he announces his discovery of telepathy and the implications of it:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9l6VPpDublg

Other noteworthy people who have discovered the reality of psi in the past whose work you can look up and research, are Ingo Swann, CIA Remote Viewer, and JB Rhine, the founder of Parapsychology who coined the term "ESP – Extrasensory Perception" after establishing it as a real phenomenon back in the 1930's.

For more info on Ingo Swann:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingo_Swann

http://www.remoteviewer.org/remoteviewing/swann.htm

http://www.biomindsuperpowers.com/Pages/Superpowers.html

For more info on JB Rhine and his Research Center:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Banks_Rhine

http://archived.parapsych.org/members/jb_rhine.html

http://www.rhine.org

Argument # 19: Alternative medicine and remedies have no scientific basis. All claims of their effectiveness are due to placebo effect or coincidence.

This is a very presumptuous statement and a rush to judgment. It basically presumes that if we don't understand how or why something works, then it must be due to chance, the placebo effect or the person's own imagination. Since we don't know everything there is to know about the body and mind, why should we assume that only what we understand is real and the rest is superstition? There are already many functions, mechanisms and processes of the body and mind that we don't fully understand. Some examples of these are photographic memory, the ability of people with autism to perform lightning mental calculations, extraordinary and gifted musical aptitude in child prodigies, certain mental disorders, dreaming, aging, consciousness itself, etc. Now if everything we didn't understand was due to superstition, then nothing would have really worked until we understood how it worked, which is ludicrous and almost anything in nature can prove that wrong. Likewise, we still don't understand why women who live together tend to menstruate in the same cycles either, but that doesn't mean that it's not true. Just because we don't understand why something works, doesn't mean that it doesn't work. Reality does not conform to what we are able to understand. There are not two strict categories where either 1) we understand it, or 2) it's just a placebo effect.

The important thing is that if an alternative treatment works, then we should try to understand *how* and *why* it works, rather than trying to put it on the same significance level as placebos. Understanding the mechanism behind the placebo effect is important, as it teaches us more about the mind/body connection. Marcello Truzzi, one of the founders of CSICOP (who broke away from it later due to its rising fanaticism), has emphasized this to me before. Michael Talbot also pointed out in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 91)

> "We now know that on average 35 percent of all people who receive a given placebo will experience a significant effect, although this number can vary greatly from situation to situation. In addition to

> angina pectoris, conditions that have proved responsive to placebo treatment include migraine headaches, allergies, fever, the common cold, acne, asthma, warts, various kinds of pain, nausea and seasickness, peptic ulcers, psychiatric syndromes such as depression and anxiety, rheumatoid and degenerative arthritis, diabetes, radiation sickness, Parkinsonism, multiple sclerosis, and cancer."

Besides, many alternative medicine practices are based on the power of thought and visualization. For those, a case can be made for the validity of the mind over matter theory since labs like Princeton's PEAR research labs have pretty much proven that micro-psychokinesis exist. Even before this, an abundance of medical research already proved that a mind body connection exists far deeper than we had thought. In fact, studies have been done to prove the power of mental visualization techniques over the body. For example, Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a radiation oncologist and medical director of the Cancer Counseling and Research Center in Dallas, Texas, did the follow study described by Michael Talbot in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 83)

> "In a follow-up study, Simonton and his colleagues taught their mental imagery techniques to 159 patients with cancers considered medically incurable. The expected survival time for such a patient is twelve months. Four years later 63 of the patients were still alive. Of those, 14 showed no evidence of disease, the cancers were regressing in 12, and in 17 the disease was stable. The average survival time of the group as a whole was 24.4 months, over twice as long as the national norm. (Footnote 1) ……. Simonton has since conducted a number of similar studies, all with positive results.
>
> Footnote 1 from back of book:
> Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, O. Carl Simonton, and James L. Creighton, Getting Well Again (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), pp. 6-12."

Although there are plenty of quack things in alternative medicine today, the fact is that certain types of alternative healing practices have already been proven to work. Skeptics are often misinformed on these. One strong example is Acupuncture. When first introduced in the west, it was thought to be superstition and only due to the placebo effect. However, as

it was more and more commonly practiced, doctors and the public came to realize that there was something to it after all. In fact, the American Medical Association now says that acupuncture is an effective form of treatment. There are also plenty of studies to support this. Michael Talbot describes some of them in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 113-116)

> “Although still controversial, acupuncture is gaining acceptance in the medical community and has even been used successfully to treat chronic back pain in racehorses.
>
> In 1957 a French physician and acupuncturist named Paul Nogier published a book called *Treatise of Auriculotherapy*, in which he announced his discovery that in addition to the major acupuncture system, there are two smaller acupuncture systems on both ears. He dubbed these acupuncture microsystems and noted that when one played a kind of connect-the-dots game with them, they formed an anatomical map of a miniature human inverted like a fetus (see fig. 13). Unbeknownst to Nogier, the Chinese had discovered the "little man in the ear" nearly 4,000 years earlier, but a map of the Chinese ear system wasn't published until after Nogier had already laid claim to the idea.
>
> The little man in the ear is not a just a charming aside in the history of acupuncture. Dr. Terry Oleson, a psychobiologist at the Pain Management Clinic at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, has discovered that the ear microsystem can be used to diagnose accurately what's going on in the body. For instance, Oleson has discovered that increased electrical activity in one of the acupuncture points in the ear generally indicates a pathological condition (either past or present) in the corresponding area of the body. In one study, forty patients were examined to determine areas of their body where they experienced chronic pain. Following the examination, each patient was draped in a sheet to conceal any visible problems. Then an acupuncturist with no knowledge of the results examined only their ears. When the results were tallied it was discovered that the ear examinations were in agreement with the established medical diagnoses 75.2 percent of the time. (Footnote 72)
>
> (In the book, a diagram of a fetus shape in the ear is here)

(Figure 13 The Little Man in the Ear. Acupuncturists have found that the acupuncture points in the ear form the outline of a miniature human being. Dr. Terry Oleson, a psychobiologist at UCLA's School of Medicine, believes it is because the body is a hologram and each of its portions contains an image of the whole.)

Ear examinations can also reveal problems with the bones and internal organs. Once when Oleson was out boating with an acquaintance he noticed an abnormally flaky patch of skin in one of the man's ears. From his research Oleson knew the spot corresponded to the heart, and he suggested to the man that he might want to get his heart checked. The man went to his doctor the next day and discovered he had a cardiac problem which required immediate open-heart surgery. (Footnote 73)

Oleson also uses electrical stimulation of the acupuncture points in the ear to treat chronic pain, weight problems, hearing loss, and virtually all kinds of addiction. In one study of 14 narcotic addicted indiviuals, Oleson and his colleagues used ear acupuncture to eliminate the drug requirements of 12 of them in an average of 5 days and with only minimal withdrawal symptoms. (Footnote 74) Indeed, ear acupuncture has proved so successful in bringing about rapid narcotic detoxification that clinics in both Los Angeles and New York are now using the the technique to treat street addicts.

Why would the acupuncture points in the ear be aligned in the shape of a miniature human? Oleson believes it is because of the holographic nature of the mind and body. Just as every portion of a hologram contains the image of the whole, every portion of the body may also contain the image of the whole. "The ear holograph is, logically, connected to the brain holograph which itself is conected to the whole body," he states. "The way we use the ear to affect the rest of the body is by working through the brain holograph." (Footnote 75)

Oleson believes there are probably acupuncture microsystems in other parts of the body as well. Dr. Ralph Alan Dale, the director of the Acupuncture Education Center in North Miami Beach, Florida, agrees. After spending the last two decades tracking down clinical

and research data from China, Japan, and Germany, he has accumulated evidence of eighteen different microacupuncture holograms in the body, including ones in the hands, feet, arms, neck, tongue, and even the gums. Like Oleson, Dale feels these microsystems are "holographic reiterations of the gross anatomy," and believes there are still other such systems waiting to be discovered. In a notion reminiscent of Bohm's assertion that every electron in some way contains the cosmos, Dale hypothesizes that every finger, and even every cell, may contain its own acupuncture microsystem. (Footnote 76)

Richard Leviton, a contributing editor at East West magazine, who has written about the holographic implications of acupuncture microsystems, thinks that alternative medical techniques - such as reflexology, a type of massage therapy that involves accessing all points of the body through stimulation of the feet, and iridology, a diagnostic technique that involves examining the iris of the eye in order to determine the condition fo the body - may also be indications of the body's holographic nature. Leviton concedes that neither field has been experimentally vindicated (studies of iridology, in particular, have produced extremely conflicting results) but feels the holographic idea offers a way of understanding them if their legitimacy is established.

Corresponding footnotes from back of the book:
72. Terrence D. Oleson, Richeard J. Kroening, and David E. Bresler, "An Experimental Evaluation of Auricular Diagnosis: The Somatotopic Mapping of Musculoskeletal Pain at Ear Acupuncture Points," Pain 8 (1980), pp. 217-29.
73. Private communication with author, September 24, 1988.
74. Terrence D. Oleson and Richard J. Kroening, "Rapid Narcotic Detoxification in Chronic Pain Patients Treated with Auricular Electroacupuncture and Naloxone," International Journal of the Addictions 20, no. 9 (1985), pp. 1347-60.
75. Richard Leviton, "The Holographic Body," East West 18, no. 8 (August 1988), p. 42.
76. Ibid., p. 45.”

An experiment described in *Discover* magazine (September 1998 issue) revealed that neurological evidence from MRI scans of the brain

supported Acupuncture. Here are some excerpts from the magazine, which you can read online at http://www.discover.com/sept_issue/acupunc.html:

> “Cho's unexpected relief prodded his professional curiosity. As a physicist working in radiology, Cho develops ways to image the complex inner workings of the body; one of his inventions was a prototype PET scanner around 1975. How, he wondered, could inserting needles into seemingly random points on the body possibly affect human health? So he decided to take a closer look, and what he found astounded him. While sticking needles into a few student volunteers, he took pictures of their brains and discovered that by stimulating an acupuncture point said to be associated with vision-but that is nowhere near anything known to be connected to the eyes-he could indeed trigger activity in the very part of the brain that controls vision. There just might be something to this acupuncture thing, he figured……
>
> To test that premise, Cho strapped student volunteers into an fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) machine. While standard MRI provides static cross-sectional pictures of structures in the body, functional MRI goes further to reveal how those structures are working. It measures minute changes in the amount of oxygen carried in the blood, which is presumably a rough measure of glucose uptake by various tissues and thus a good indicator of which tissues are active; the results can be viewed as colorful fmri brain activation maps.
>
> Cho first stimulated the eyes of the volunteers through traditional means: he flashed a light in front of them. The resulting images, as expected, showed a concentration of color-an increase in activity-in the visual cortex, the portion of the brain that is known to be involved in eye function. Then Cho had an acupuncturist stimulate the acupoint VA1. In one person after another, the very same region of the brain-the visual cortex-lit up on the fMRI image.
>
> As odd as it seemed, sticking a needle into someone's foot had the very same effect as shining a light in someone's eyes. And this was not the generalized analgesic effect, produced by the primitive limbic system, that was seen in the pain studies; this was a function-

specific response occurring in the brain's cortex, the area responsible for such sophisticated functions as speech and hearing, memory and intellect. Moreover, the magnitude of brain activity seen on acupuncture stimulation was nearly as strong as that elicited by the flash of light.

"It was very exciting," recalls Cho. "I never thought anything would happen, but it's very clear that stimulating the acupuncture point triggers activity in the visual cortex." To eliminate the possibility of a placebo effect, Cho also stimulated a nonacupoint, in the big toe. There was no response in the visual cortex.

Next, Cho tried each form of stimulation over time, twisting the needle for a moment or flashing the light, resting, then repeating. As before, the fMRI images were remarkably similar for acupuncture and for light stimulation. The time-course study was also done using the three other vision acupoints on the foot. The results were again consistent: except in the case of VA2, each acupoint lit up the visual cortex exactly as the light stimulation had done. This time, however, Cho noticed something else. When the activation data were graphed to show the intensity of the response over time, he saw that there were two distinct reactions among the dozen volunteers. During the acupuncture phase, some showed an increase in activity, while others showed a decrease. In other words, in some people, oxygen consumption in that brain region increased, while in others, it decreased.

"I figured we must have made a mistake," says Cho. Repeating the experiment, however, he saw the same results every time. "Finally one of the acupuncturists mentioned, 'Oh, yes, it's yin and yang.'" Cho asked him which subjects were yin and which were yang, and without seeing the data, the practitioner correctly pointed out who had shown an increase in activity (yang) and who had had a decrease (yin) in 11 of 12 cases. "I don't know how to explain it," Cho says.

Like many preliminary scientific reports, Cho's small study raises more questions than it answers. Still, he has demonstrated new functional effects of acupuncture. "Classically, acupuncture was the ultimate in experimentation; people collected data for thousands of

years," says Joie Jones, professor of radiological sciences at the University of California at Irvine and coauthor of the study. "They noticed that when you applied a needle in one position, it would have an effect in another part of the body. But the connection through the brain was never made. With these studies, we've demonstrated that for at least some acupuncture points it goes through the brain."

Yet even if it does go through the brain, how does stimulating a specific point on the foot trigger activity in the part of the brain that controls vision? There is no explanation for that either, says Cho, although he suspects that the path is along the nervous system. If that proves to be true, it's probably not the same pathway by which acupuncture causes the release of endorphins, says Pomeranz. "That endorphins are released by stimulating certain types of nerves in fibers anywhere in the body, that's understood. But that there is a specific connection between your toe and your visual system is really bizarre. That's really mind-boggling."

Despite the absence of clear-cut explanations, acupuncture's clinical results are attracting interest from mainstream medicine. A panel of independent experts convened last year by the National Institutes of Health concluded that acupuncture is indeed effective in treating nausea due to anesthesia and chemotherapy drugs. It is also helpful in treating post-surgical and other forms of pain. Moreover, the panel noted, despite the pervasive belief in the superior clinical effects of Western medicine, plenty of conventional treatments for chronic pain show the same success rate as acupuncture-and often with harmful side effects.

One of the more provocative acupuncture studies used SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) to record images of the brains of patients with chronic pain. That study, by Abass Alavi, chief of nuclear medicine at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, measured blood flow to the brain structures that are suspected of releasing endorphins in response to acupuncture stimulus-the thalamus, hypothalamus, and brain stem. Comparing baseline images of people who were in pain with images taken after they received acupuncture treatment, Alavi found clear evidence of

> increased blood flow in the thalamus and the brain stem. He also found that treated patients felt less pain.
>
> Like Cho, Alavi was not a believer in acupuncture or other forms of Chinese medicine before doing this study. "I thought acupuncture was more or less psychological, not an objective effect," he says. "I did this study just for fun. I figured nothing would show up.""

To read about studies that concluded that acupuncture had an effect beyond placebo, see this article in *Natural News*: http://www.naturalnews.com/025057_acupuncture_placebo_changes.html

Some skeptics have admitted that Acupuncture may be effective for some things, such as pain reducation, but they maintain that the theory of chi and meridians on which acupuncture is based, has no merit. Bob Carroll of *The Skeptic's Dictionary* website emphasized this in his entry on Acupuncture. What they don't understand about chi though is that it not only works and gets results, but those using it also feel its effects too, the same way you would feel heat from a fire. In fact, this was shown on one episode of Bill Moyers' *Healing and the Mind* series. Moyers himself experienced this firsthand. A chi gong healer put his finger near Moyer's arm and Moyer smiled and said he definitely felt the heat go into his arm. (I too have had this experience when I was in Taiwan.) In the same episode, a chi master was also shown to be able to remain stationary while lots of other people tried to move him.

Chi practitioners can see and test chi at work just like we see gravity at work. Chi has been used by martial artists, tai chi practitioners, and quigong practitioners, to heal, move objects/people without touching them, strike hard body blows with a light touch, remain stationary when groups of strong burly men try to move them, snuff out candles from across the hallway, and other feats. While everyone supposedly has chi, learning to control it takes years, though some seem to be able to summon it naturally. All a skeptic has to do to learn about chi is to visit a martial arts dojo where chi is taught and used. If they ask, a demonstration of chi can be made either on them or one of the students. I have done this myself and seen demonstrations such as masters sparring striking blows onto students (apparent by the painful grimace on the students' faces) without barely even touching them, if at all. I have

also seen chi practitioners in Taiwan bend long metal steel poles with just their necks, and I inspected the poles afterward and they were made of steel alright. (I was told this was a common chi feat in Asia.) One time in a dojo, I held chopsticks in my own hands while a student used the paper the chopsticks were taken out of, to break them. (I still have the broken chopsticks today.) It would really be poetic justice I think, for a skeptic to feel the effects of chi firsthand

In any case, the bottom line about alternative medicine/treatment is that it CAN work and it HAS worked before. Now I am not one of those anti-pharmaceutical company people who believes in forgoing all pharmaceutical drugs in place of herbal remedies or alternative treatments. One of the concerns of skeptics is that people may risk their lives by forgoing conventional drug treatments for alternative remedies instead. This, they maintain, is the danger of alternative medicine. (Michael Shermer loves to tout that as his motivation for debunking) However, I do not advocate that. I think that they should be used in conjunction. If one wants to try an alternative remedy that seems to work, he/she should in addition to prescribed medication given by a licensed doctor.

What skeptics don't seem to get though, is that the common sense rule is that if something WORKS, then people will and have a right to use it again, until it stops working. It's simple sound reasoning to do what simply works, and all creatures since the beginning of our planet have done that! So I find it odd that many skeptics are advising people to stop all alternative remedies even if they work, cure people, or save lives. Here is an example of what I mean which says it all, from an article about Homeopathy (energy water) in *Psychology Today* (March/April 2004)

> www.psychologytoday.com/htdocs/prod/ptoarticle/pto-20040302-000003.asp
>
> "Amy Lansky didn't care that homeopathy is one of America's least accepted alternative therapies. After nine months of homeopathic treatment, Max was a different child: talkative, active, sociable and popular. Under Melnychuk's guidance, Lansky gradually decreased his dose of Carcinosin, eventually

discontinuing it. Max continued to improve. By age five, he was virtually indistinguishable from any other kid. “He now sees Melnychuk maybe twice a year,” says Lansky. “As far as I’m concerned, he’s cured.”

Max’s experience led Lansky to quit her job and study homeopathy full-time. Last fall, she hung out a shingle. “As a scientist,” she explains, “I recognize that homeopathy is implausible. But I’ve seen it cure my son.””

Argument # 20: Miracles are impossible and defy everything we know about science.

We could begin this the geeky anal retentive way by attempting to define what a “miracle” is, but since any average English speaking person knows what it is, I think it’s unnecessary. The difference is that though miracles are generally assumed by most to be supernatural or paranormal in nature, skeptics consider such events to be merely “unexplained” or explainable by natural phenomena or spontaneous healing flukes.

These skeptics consider supernatural or paranormal miracles to be impossible. While not all skeptics adhere to it, there are some that do nevertheless. This claim is based on an *a priori* assumption that our known physical laws are all there is. How would skeptics know all that is possible and impossible though? Our natural laws are our interpretation of how the universe works. These laws are subject to change as new discoveries are made, which is how science has always been. (See rebuttal to Argument # 10) Current scientific principles only reflect the current knowledge that has been tested and replicated, not all that is or can be. In fact, what is considered to be miraculous or supernatural at first has often turned out to be natural once it’s understood. Dean Radin elaborates on this in his book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*: (page 19)

> “But a few hundred years ago virtually all natural phenomena were thought to be manifestations of supernatural agencies and spirits. Through years of systematic investigation, many of these phenomena are now understood in quite ordinary terms. Thus, it is entirely reasonable to expect that so-called miracles are simply indicators of our present ignorance. Any such events may be more properly labeled first as paranormal, then as normal once we have developed an acceptable scientific explanation. As astronaut Edgar Mitchell put it: “There are no unnatural or supernatural phenomena, only very large gaps in our knowledge of what is natural, particularly regarding relatively rare occurrences.””

History has shown that those who use the word "impossible" are usually proven wrong one way or another. Many things that were said to be impossible at one point were later proved to be possible such as flight, breaking the sound barrier, space travel, relativity, quantum theory, etc.

As Arthur C. Clarke, inventor of the communications satellite and author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, states:

> "When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."
> - Arthur C. Clarke's First Law

In either case, miracles do happen. Many doctors and nurses can attest to this. The question is, and skeptics like to point this out too, in how you define a miracle. Skeptics will usually accept miracles such as the miracle of life and science, or miracles due to flukes and rare chance occurrences such as spontaneous remission, but not if they involve supernatural forces or divine intervention. Possible explanations of miracles include supernatural forces, divine intervention, psychic abilities, unknown powers and healing abilities of the mind, spontaneous remission of illness, chance, or natural causes not yet understood. Whatever the case, the "miracles are impossible" argument is illogical because miracles *have* happened already. There is ample evidence of this both from anecdotals and hard evidence from X-Rays of the affected region of the patient's body that were taken before and after the miracle.

In fact, according to a Newsweek poll, described in the May 1, 2000 issue, 84 percent of adult Americans say they believe that God performs miracles and 48 percent report that they have personally experienced or witnessed one. Three fourths of American Catholics say they pray for miracles, and among non-Christians, and nonreligious people, 43 percent say they have asked for God's intervention. Now, 48 percent of Americans is a huge number, about 150 million people. And that can't all be due misperception, mistake, or flukes on the probability curve. Common sense tells us that statistically, such widespread reports probably points to a real phenomenon, whatever it may be.

In fact, Robert S. Bobrow, of the Department of Family Medicine at the Health Sciences Center in Stony Brook, NY, cited genuine occurrences of

paranormal phenomena in medical literature which might require a revision of our current paradigms to explain. In his report, *Paranormal phenomena in the medical literature sufficient smoke to warrant a search for fire*, he summarized:

> "Summary Paranormal phenomena – events that cannot be explained by existing science – are regularly reported in medicine. Surveys have shown that a majority of the population of the United States and Great Britain hold at least one paranormal belief. Information was retrieved by MEDLINE searches using keywords 'paranormal' and 'psychic', and from the author's own collection. Reports are predominantly by physicians, and from peer-reviewed, MEDLINE-indexed literature. This is a representative sample, as there is no database for paranormal medical phenomena. Presented and discussed are: a case of systemic lupus erythematosis ameliorated by witchcraft; an analysis of studies on distant healing; acupuncture, as a bridge between what is now accepted but recently would have been deemed paranormal; a carefully-done study of a psychic; auditory hallucinations informing a patient, correctly, that she had a brain tumor; two nearly-identical lay press reports of self-predicted death; lycanthropy (the delusion of being an animal); the development of Carl Jung's collective unconscious; hypnosis – still questioned despite documented therapeutic benefit, and a well-researched report of a person speaking a foreign language, apparently unlearned (xenoglossy) while hypnotized; and multiple examples of children who spout the details of the life of an unknown, deceased person. The inability of existing paradigms to explain these observations does not negate them; rather, it elucidates a need for more research."

To read the full report, you can download it from my site at: http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Paranormalphenomena_LitMedical.pdf . My Bobrow has also written a book entitled *The Witch in the Waiting Room: A Physician Investigates Paranormal Phenomena in Medicine*.

One famous documented case of a miracle is the case of Vittorio Michelli. Michael Talbot in his book *The Holographic Universe* describes the case:

> "Perhaps the most powerful types of beliefs of all are those we express through spiritual faith. In 1962 a man named Vittorio

> Michelli was admitted to the Military Hospital of Verona, Italy, with a large cancerous tumor on his left hip (see fig. 11). So dire was his prognosis that he was sent home without treatment, and within ten months his hip had completely disintegrated, leaving a the bone of his upper leg floating in nothing more than a mass of soft tissue. He was, quite literally, falling apart. As a last resort he traveled to Lourdes and had himself bathed in the spring (by this time he was in a plaster case, and his movements were quite restricted). Immediately on entering the water he had a sensation of heat moving through his body. After the bath his appetite returned and he felt renewed energy. He had several more baths and then returned home.
>
> Over the course of the next month he felt such an increasing sense of well-being he insisted his doctors X-ray him again. They discovered his tumor was smaller. They were so intrigued they documented every step in his improvement. It was a good thing because after Michelli's tumor disappeared, his bone began to regenerate, and the medical community generally view this as an impossibility. Within two months he was up and walking again, and over the course of the next several years his bone completely reconstructed itself (see fig. 12).
>
> A dossier on Michelli's case was sent to the Vatican's Medical Commission, an international panel of doctors set up to investigate such matters, and after examining the evidence the commission decided Michelli had indeed experienced a miracle. As the commission stated in its official report, "A remarkable reconstruction of the iliac bone and cavity has taken place. The X rays made in 1964, 1965, 1968 and 1969 confirm categorically and without doubt that an unforeseen and even overwhelming bone reconstruction has taken place of a type unknown in the annals of world medicine." (O'Reagan, Special Report, p. 9.)”

Some skeptics claim that miraculous healings are due to flukes in the probability curve. Their reasoning goes like this*:*

> *“Most people who are seriously ill are prayed for or seek divine intervention. The ones that don’t make it are considered tragedies and forgotten cases. The few cases that result in a sudden*

complete recovery or go into spontaneous remission are then noticed and attributed to prayer or divine intervention. These cases of course, are the ones that get media attention."

However, this explanation is a lot like saying that anything we don't understand must be due to chance. Sure spontaneous remission happens as well, even to those who are Atheists and those that haven't been prayed for. But even so, who's to say that spontaneous remission is solely the result of chance and luck? The bottom line is that miracles do happen, that is a fact. How we interpret them is the issue.

Argument # 21: The Skeptical explanation for answered prayers – Selective memory and coincidence.

Stated as: "Prayer only works because you selectively remember the answered prayers but not the unanswered ones, which are all due to chance and coincidence."

While this theory may be true in some cases, it does not explain every account of answered prayer. Again, just because skeptics can't see how a God could exist or how thought intentions could affect external reality doesn't mean that any claim of answered prayer is merely the result of chance. There are several counter-arguments to this and compelling evidence that prayer works as well. I will also give my own theory on how prayer works.

1) First of all, we don't even know what a coincidence really is or even if it really exists. It's just a term to define something that behaves unpredictably or doesn't behave according to a pattern that we can see. According to physicist David Bohm, there may be two kinds of order in the universe, implicit and explicit. (See his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*) Things that appear random may in fact contain a higher degree of order that we can't perceive.

2) Second, as I heard one preacher said "If answered prayer is coincidence, then there sure are many more coincidences that come up when I pray than when I don't pray." For spiritual or religious people, praying results in a higher rate of coincidences that help manifest the desire or wish, often higher than by ordinary chance. Of course, there are countless anecdotal accounts of prayer answered in miraculous or sometimes humorous ways. As Theology Professor Greg Boyd of Bethel University told me in an email:

> "My wife prayed that God would honor a "deal" with her about who she would marry (this deal included her future husband saying a certain particularly unusual phrase), and despite all my frustration with knowing she had made such a deal, I said what was "included" in her deal with God without ever actually knowing what the phrase was, not only that, it was the last thing I said to her, several times,

> immediately before I distinctly felt God leading me to propose to her."
>
> "The phrase was "It's good to be alive." This seems like a fairly unusual thing to say since it is so obvious at one level. Anyway, it is not something that I would be likely to say on an average day. On the day of our "engagement" I said it several times at just the right moment (during a prayer about our relationship) and actually the prayer (we were praying together) immediately followed a longish conversation about why I didn't believe in engagement periods at all. It seems God has quite a sense of humor at times."

Amazingly, there are those who get almost every prayer answered because their motives come from a pure heart that is in tune with the values of their faith. What this means is that Christian prayers seem to get answered a lot more when they ask for things that a Christian is supposed to want. Same with prayers from those of other religions.

This has been the case in my own experience as well. When I was a devout Christian at 14, I was the only Christian in my family and had no one else to share my faith with or go to church with. I felt lonely and incomplete about this. So one night I prayed and asked God to send me some Christian friends. Two nights later, I got a call from an old friend that I hadn't spoken to in over a year. He's not the type of person to make phone calls either, so neither of us knew why he just decided to call me. After talking a few times, we got to the subject of church and religion. We were surprised to find out that we were both devout Christians! When I explained to him that I had no Christian friends or church to go to, he invited me to an outing with his Church Youth Group which he attended on a regular basis. That Friday, we went to his Youth Group for an all night outing. We went haystack riding, played miniature golf, charades, Pictionary, kick-the-can and had a lot of fun. I liked the people in his Youth Group. They were sincere and didn't have attitudes or pre-judgments. I felt very comfortable around them.

From that point on, I started attending the Youth Group regularly. Now a skeptic could argue that the friend called me out of coincidence, but I don't buy that because it was strange how this friend I hadn't talked to in over a year suddenly out of nowhere kept calling me a few times.

Not even he knew why he did that. Yet it led to my prayer for Christian fellowship being answered.

3) Third, based on conversations with some Christian friends of mine, I have found that God doesn't just answer prayer through coincidences. There is a more amazing type of answered prayer. Often, as in my own case above, a prayer is answered with the help of other people who themselves don't know why they are doing what they're doing. (as if they're hypnotized)

Nick, a Christian friend of mine, related to me a fascinating faith-transforming account in his life. After turning away from his Christian faith for years, one day his fishing boat went down in deep waters and nothing he and professional divers did could get it out. After months of failed attempts, he and the divers gave up. Then a friend of his told him "You will get your boat back. God will see to it." Soon after, some stranger called Nick and offered to help raise his boat for free. This guy said that he heard that Nick needed help and went to great lengths to find Nick's phone number to contact him. As we all know, strangers don't tend to go to great lengths to find you just to help you out for free and for no reason! That does not seem like an ordinary coincidence. This stranger even offered to pay all the expenses of lifting the boat out! (I've heard of random acts of kindness, but this is phenomenal!) It turns out that he barely got it out and it almost sank again after it was lifted, but the rescuer saved it just in time.

The next day, a short story about his boat (the boat's name was mentioned in the headline) being "resurrected" from the sea appeared at the top of the front page headline, even above the story of Pope John Paul's arrival in town! Astonished, Nick called the newspaper to find out how his trivial story appeared on the front page headline since it was not a significant event to the public. However, no one there seemed to know why it was there or how it got there. (Very strange!)

This served was such a powerful sign from God and testament of faith to Nick, that from then on he led a faith-based life in God. Many other Christians have personal accounts of answered prayer similar to this of course. It would seem that God somehow *hypnotizes* people (for lack of a better word) into answering someone else's prayer, since these people don't know themselves why they're doing something that

results in another's answered prayer. But this happens nevertheless, and my own example in the above paragraph attests to this as well.

4) Fourth, recent studies on prayer done by Duke University and others have revealed the effect that the power of prayer has on those who are critically ill. Double-blind tests done have shown that those who were prayed for recovered much more quickly and at a higher success rate than those not prayed for. As one of Duke's own articles summarized:

http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/Med/MANTRA2.HTM

"In a feasibility study conducted by the Duke University and Durham Veterans Affairs medical centers, angioplasty patients with acute coronary syndromes who were simultaneously prayed for by seven different religious sects around the world did 50 percent to 100 percent better during their hospital stay than patients who were not prayed for by these groups."

While we don't know for sure whether God himself is answering these prayers, or if they are being answered by the psychic abilities of those praying, the bottom line is that prayer does seem to work in ways that ordinary coincidences can't explain.

5) Fifth, In my experience with prayers, it seems that prayers from a selfish nature tend to get answered less than when they come from a desire for what is right and best for all. One metaphysical explanation for this that I've heard is that when desires come from an altruistic motive, they reach the energy from higher astral planes or levels of consciousness. These higher planes are supposedly where more advanced spiritual beings reside, including Gods, Jesus, Buddha, etc. Perhaps prayers of a selfish nature cause a separation from you and your higher self that is attuned to the higher planes. This inner separation leads you to down the path of ego and illusion rather than unification and wholeness. After all, a divided kingdom falls, even if it's an inner kingdom. This theory is subjective and can't be proven scientifically at this point, but it's one possibility to consider which would explain why purer altruistic motives for prayer tend to result in a higher rate of success.

My own theory on how and why prayer works

Now, you may be wondering how prayers and miracles could be real supernatural phenomena, yet the religions behind them not be true. How could you harmonize that? Well there are other explanations that theoretically harmonize them.

I have a theory which I call **metaphysical societies**. A Canadian colleague I had in Taiwan helped me formulate it. We were talking about religion and answered prayer, and how and why they worked. I mentioned that I had some amazing stories of answered prayer that I knew weren't just coincidence, when I was a Christian. Yet, the beliefs and doctrines of Christian fundamentalism have obviously been proven false for me in the literal sense, so I was trying to make sense of how prayers could still be answered. Aaron, the colleague I had these discussions with, then started explaining to me about "metaphysical societies." It made a lot of sense to me and provided a unified theory.

Here is how it goes. As we all know, in New Age quantum theory, "thought creates reality" in a universal sense, even though in our dimension, this principle is reflected much more weakly and slowly than in other dimensions. Therefore, when a group of people gather for a single purpose, they create a certain energy field between them that makes their power stronger. And that's especially true with organized religion. And in Christianity's case, with a billion followers, that energy field would be very powerful indeed. Therefore, when one is indoctrinated into Christianity, he/she also becomes part of this massive group energy field, and is governed by its principles, values and beliefs. As a result, when that person lives according to the values of this energy field, that energy field works to help that person in many ways, including answering its prayers. That is why, when I was a Christian, I found that when I prayed for things that I was *supposed* to pray for, that a good Christian should want and desire, it had a very high probability of manifesting and coming true, smoothly and easily. However, when I prayed and asked for things of a purely selfish nature, it had a very low probability of manifesting. I noticed this pattern. And when prayers came true, whether for me or others, it would obviously not be ordinary day to day coincidences or selective perception and memory, because the answered prayers would come about by seemingly improbable odds, all

synchronized to manifest the result. Sometimes, in manifesting the prayer, people would be involved who did odd things and later claimed that they had no idea why they even did it, but what they did brought about the answered prayer. These kind of things tell anyone that it was a real answered prayer, and not coincidence or selective memory.

This same "metaphysical society" effect happens in other religions as well, since people in other religions get prayers answered as well, as long as they are in accordance with the values of their metaphysical society. I have even heard that with Wiccans, when they make a pledge to a goddess and then break it without asking permission of that goddess, they often reap bad or disastrous consequences, until they go back and ask permission of the goddess to leave. Perhaps, these goddess that Wiccans pledge to are also metaphysically created, either in some other dimension or the mind of the believers, so that they do exist in a metaphysical sense, having power and influence in our lives, physical world and dimension.

Argument # 22: The Skeptical explanation for precognitive dreams – Selective memory and coincidence.

Stated as: "The explanation for precognitive dreams come true is that you selectively remember the dreams that come true but not those that don't, and attribute it to precognition."

This is a standard cop out that basically says "If we can't explain something or it doesn't fit into our paradigm of reality" then it must be due to coincidence. To declare that with an absolute certainty requires that the skeptic have absolute infallible omniscient knowledge of the universe. They certainly don't have that. Therefore they are not qualified to declare what is a coincidence and what isn't. Logically they should just say "I don't know", but as we've seen time and time again, they are prejudiced against admitting that they don't know something, due to their fear and psychological block against the mysterious. They hate mysteries and can't tolerate their existence, so they need to explain every mystery away. That's their philosophy, but it's not logical (unless you're going by their hijacked definition of logic which supports their warped philosophy). Again, they are making unqualified declarations due to their prejudices and biases, not objectivity.

Here is an example of a compelling precognitive dream cited by Larry Dossey M.D., author of *The Power of Premonitions*:

> "Amanda, a young mother in Washington State, was awakened one night by a horrible dream. She dreamed that the chandelier in the next room had fallen from the ceiling onto her sleeping infant's crib and crushed the baby. In the dream she saw a clock in the baby's room that read 4:35, and that wind and rain were hammering the windows. Extremely upset, she awakened her husband and told him her dream. He said it was silly and to go back to sleep. But the dream was so frightening that Amanda went into the baby's room and brought it back to bed with her. Soon she was awakened by a loud crash in the baby's room. She rushed in to see that the chandelier had fallen and crushed the crib -- and that the clock in the room read 4:35, and that wind and rain were howling outside.

> Her dream premonition was camera-like in detail, including the specific event, the precise time, and even a change in the weather."

As you can see, this is a compelling case highly suggestive of our occasional ability to glimpse forward into time and space. But since it doesn't fit the pseudoskeptic's paradigm, it MUST, by their definition, be due to coincidence. It still constitutes zero evidence to them. This is not only faulty logic, but it's indicative of an agenda to suppress our expansion of consciousness.

Besides, we don't know that much about where dreams come from and what they mean to assume that they're nothing but random thoughts and images. We understand how people dream, but not why. Skeptics again are inadvertently claiming to know too much to declare something false or coincidental. In addition, the fact that there is convincing evidence for psychic phenomena in general such as telepathy from the numerous labs that did the Ganzfeld experiments, psychokinesis from Princeton's 20 year PEAR programs, and remote viewing/clairvoyance from SRI and other research labs, makes precognition much more probable than otherwise. You see, when one form of psi is proven, it raises the plausibility of the others by indicating that there are indeed paranormal powers of consciousness that we don't understand.

Argument # 23: The Dying Brain Hypothesis for Near Death Experiences.

Stated as: "Near death experiences (NDE's) are hallucinations caused by the stress of an oxygen-deprived dying brain."

This argument, called the *Dying Brain Hypothesis*, is purported by many skeptics and materialists. NDE Skeptic and University of London Psychology Professor Susan Blackmore is one of the main proponents of this theory. In her book *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences*, she argues that the NDE is merely the result of hallucinations from the brain that erupt as it malfunctions and collapses. However, Greg Stone, an NDE expert on my discussion list, wrote an elaborate and excellent critique of Blackmore's book in his article *Critique of Susan Blackmore's Dying to Live* at http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Critique_Blackmore.htm.

Stone has also written a thought-provoking and exciting novel about NDE's entitled *Under the Tree* which presents all arguments from both sides of the NDE controversy (I consider it a must read for all seekers and enthusiasts) which you can get at www.visitunderthetree.com

The main criticism of Blackmore's work by many NDE researchers is that she dismisses the vast data that doesn't fit into her hypotheses. Author Kenneth Ring, who wrote *Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience* pointed this out in an article he wrote for the Winter 1995 issue of the *Journal of Near-Death Studies*.

Although many features of the NDE can be explained by neurological or physiological processes, this doesn't explain the message being sent. In fact, the neurological effects could just be the result effects of the NDE, rather than the cause. Perhaps the TV/radio analogy to the NDE helps explain this best. As Kevin Williams of www.near-death.com explains:

> "Such reductionism, however, may only be explaining the mechanism of the near-death experience, not necessarily the near-death experience itself. In the same way, it is possible to reduce a television set to its basic elements such as electrodes and tubes,

but one cannot satisfactorily explain the television show being played on it using reductionist terms. Concerning the chemical basis of the near-death experience and using this television analogy, if the brain can be thought of as a television set, then the near-death experience can be thought of as the television show being played on it. Science maybe able to quantify everything concerning the television set components (i.e. the brain), but science is unable to satisfactorily quantify the television show being played on it (i.e. the near-death experience)."

There are several convincing categories of evidence to suggest that NDE's are not just mere hallucinations caused by a brain that is shutting down. For more on this, see www.near-death.com. These tend to be ignored or dismissed by Blackmore and others who support the Dying Brain Hypothesis:

1) First, many NDEers have experienced them during flat EEG brain lines, which is medically inexplicable. Any activity in the brain, even simple thoughts, results in some EEG activity. Therefore, it should be impossible (according to materialistic science) to have any kind of conscious experience during a flat brainline, yet this has happened with NDE's.

   One compelling NDE case was that of Pam Reynolds, who during neurosurgery had both a flat brainline and a flat heartline yet experienced a full blown NDE, which astounded doctors. See her case featured in this documentary segment here:

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNbdUEqDB-k

   As a result of such cases, Dr. Sam Parnia and other MD's presented the case for the Afterlife at the UN Symposium. See clips of their presentation here.

2) Second, there are many well documented cases where the NDEer while out of body were able to see specific details and hear conversations in other rooms and far away places that they couldn't have known about beforehand, and yet upon returning to the body find that what they saw or heard was in fact verified to be accurate and true. This is a phenomenon that skeptics and materialists haven't been

able to explain away, so they merely deny it. Blackmore herself knows about these cases and even mentions in her book that if they are true, then her hypothesis is wrong. If NDE's and OBE's were dreams or hallucinations, then these perceptions at a distance wouldn't turn out to be accurate. The separation of spirit from body or the mind's ability to remote view are the best hypotheses that fit this well documented data. One famous example of this is the case of a nurse named Kimberly Clark. Talbot describes this incident in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 231-232)

> "Such facts notwithstanding, no amount of statistical findings are as convincing as actual accounts of such experiences. For example, Kimberly Clark, a hospital social worker in Seattle, Washington, did not take OBEs seriously until she encountered a coronary patient named Maria. Several days after being admitted to the hospital Maria had a cardiac arrest and was quickly revived. Clark visited her later that afternoon expecting to find her anxious over the fact that her heart had stopped. As she had expected, Maria was agitated, but not for the reason she had anticipated.
>
> Maria told Clark that she had experienced something very strange. After her heart had stopped she suddenly found herself looking down from the ceiling and watching the doctors and the nurses working on her. Then something over the emergency room driveway distracted her and as soon as she "thought herself" there, she was there. Next Maria "thought her way" up to the third floor of the building and found herself "eyeball to shoelace" with a tennis shoe. It was an old shoe and she noticed that the little toe had worn a whole through the fabric. She also noticed several other details, such as the fact that the lace was stuck under the heel. After Maria finished her account she begged Clark to please go to the ledge and see if there was a shoe there so that she could confirm whether her experience was real or not.
>
> Skeptical but intrigued, Clark went outside and looked up at the ledge, but saw nothing. She went up to the third floor and began going in and out of patients' rooms looking through windows so narrow she had to press her face against the glass just to see the ledge at all. Finally she found a room where she pressed her face against the glass and looked down and saw the tennis shoe. Still,

from her vantage point she could not tell if the little toe had worn a place in the shoe or if any of the other details Maria had described were correct. It wasn't until she retrieved the shoe that she confirmed Maria's various observations. "The only way she would have had such a perspective was if she had been floating right outside and at very close range to the tennis shoe," states Clark, who has since become a believer in OBEs. "It was very concrete evidence for me." (Footnote 8)

Bruce Greyson and C. P. Flynn, The Near Death Experience (Chicago: Charles C. Thomas, 1984), as quoted in Stanislov Grof, The Adventure of Self Discovery (Albany, N.T.: SUNY Press, 1988), pp. 71-72."

In addition, research studies back up these claims as well. One example is the experiment done by Cardiologist Michael Sabom. Talbot describes this as well: (page 232-233)

"Experiencing an OBE during cardiac arrest is relatively common, so common that Michael B. Sabom, a cardiologist and professor of medicine at Emory University and a staff physician at the Atlanta Veterans' Administration Medical Center, got tired of hearing his patients recount such "fantasies" and decided to settle the matter once and for all. Sabom selected two groups of patients, one composed of 32 seasoned cardiac patients who had reported OBEs during their heart attacks, and one made up of 25 seasoned cardiac patients who had never experienced an OBE. He then interviewed the patients, asking the OBEers to describe their own resuscitation as they had witnessed it from the out-of-body state, and asking the nonexperiencers to describe what they imagined must have transpired during their resuscitation.

Of the nonexperiencers, 20 made major mistakes when they described their resuscitations, 3 gave correct but general descriptions, and 2 had no idea at all what had taken place. Among the experiencers, 26 gave correct but general descriptions, 6 gave highly detailed and accurate descriptions of their own resuscitation, and 1 gave a blow-by-blow accounting so accurate that Sabom was stunned. The results inspired him to delve even deeper into the phenomenon, and like Clark, he has now become an ardent

> believer and lectures widely on the subject. There appears "to be no plausible explanation for the accuracy of these observations involving the usual physical senses," he says. "The out-of-body hypothesis simply seems to fit best with the data at hand." (Footnote 9)
>
> Michael B. Sabom, Recollections of Death (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 184."

Also significant are the studies done that support the validity of Out of Body Experiences (NDE's are considered a type of OBE). Rick Stack describes one notable example of these in his book *Out-Of-Body Adventures*: (page 12-13)

> "A notable study by Osis and McCormick involved an out-of-body subject trying to view a target that was contained within an optical image device and could be viewed only from a specific location. The target was a picture composed of several elements. These elements were not physically together in any one place within the apparatus. If you looked through the viewing window from a point directly in front of the apparatus, however, the various elements of the final target came together as an optical illusion. The OOBE subject, Alex Tanous, was instructed to project into the room with the target, which was several rooms away, and to try to view it. Meanwhile, the experimenters attempted to measure physical effects at the target location (effects that may be caused by the subject's out-of-body presence). They placed sensor plates in a shielded chamber at the viewing location. The sensors were capable of picking very small movements, or vibrations, which would then generate electrical impulses in extremely sensitive strain gauges. These strain gauges, therefore, enabled the experimenters to note very minutes changes in the vibration of the sensor plates. Tanous was led to believe that the strain gauges were being used only for a subsequent task in order to reduce the possibility of his deliberately trying to affect the sensors while attempting to view the optical image device.
>
> Osis and McCormick thought that the OOBE might be a state that fluctuated with respect to degree of externalization; that is to say, there may be degrees of clarity of intensity in the out-of-body state.

It may be possible, for example, to be both partially out of and partially in your body. The investigators hypothesized that when the OOBE subject was most fully out and, consequently, able to view the target more accurately, there would be greater mechanical (physical) effect caused by the experient's out-of-body presence than there would be when the subject was less out and, therefore, less able to accurately view the target.

The results of the Osis-McCormick study supported their hypothesis "that ostensibly unintentional kinetic effects can occur as by-products of narrowly localized OB [out-of-body] vision." In other words, apparently unintentional physical motion or effects can occur when someone sees something at a specific location while feeling that he is out-of-body. The strain gauge activation level that occurred when the subject was viewing the target and scored "hits" was significantly higher than when the subject scored "misses." This finding lends some support to the concept that the greater vibration of the sensor plates was caused by some exteriorized portion of the subject's personality. (Footnote 2)

2. "Kinetic Effects at the Ostensible Location of an Out of Body Projection during Perceptual Testing" Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 74 (1980): pp. 319-329."

Another notable example was done by Charles Tart, where a girl known as Miss Z was able to identify a 5 digit number above her bed in a position that she could only have seen if she had floated up there. This experiment is described at http://www.paradigm-sys.com/ctt_articles2.cfm?id=50

3) Third, NDE's have been experienced in those born blind, who are able to see the world and their own bodies from above for the first time during their NDE. This is medically inexplicable.

4) Fourth, NDE's usually result in permanent life changing effects whereas dreams and hallucinations do not. Usually, real experiences are what cause life changes, not imaginary ones. NDEers usually report that through their NDE they gain valuable insight into the universe, about themselves, what their lives are really all about and how we're all really connected in a vast superconsciousness, etc.

Many also report life reviews where everything they've ever done flashes through in a brief moment and they feel the impact of their actions on others, which allows them to reevaluate their lives from a much higher perspective. As a result, many learn to love more altruistically and be less selfish. In addition, most NDEers lose all fear of death as well, claiming that they've discovered that death is just a doorway, not an end.

5) Fifth, there are also cases where NDEers experience 360 degree vision while out of body, which is also impossible. And there are even cases where people blind from birth see for the first time in their life during their NDE.

6) Sixth, some people have NDE's even when they were not in danger of death. Pediatrician Dr. Melvin Morse notes some of these in his article *Are Near Death Experiences Real?:*

http://www.melvinmorse.com/e-what.htm

"The experiences do not only occur to dying dysfunctional brains. The Journal of the Swiss Alpine Club, in the late 1800s, reported 30 first hand accounts of mountain climbers who fell from great heights and lived. The climbers reported being out of their physical body, seeing heaven, having life reviews, and even hearing the impact of their bodies hitting the ground. They were not seriously injured.

Yale University Pediatric Cancer specialist Dianne Komp reports that many dying children have near death experiences, without evidence of brain dysfunction. Their experiences often occurred in dreams, prayers, or visions before death. One boy stated that Jesus had visited him in a big yellow school bus and told him he would die soon. Others heard angels singing or saw halos of light.

The American Journal of Psychiatry, in 1967, reported the experiences of two miners trapped for days in a mine. They were never near death and had adequate food and water. They said that mystical realities opened before them in the tunnels. They also said a third miner who seemed real to them helped them to safety, but disappeared when they were resuscitated."

Also see SCEPCOP member Travis Basinger's list of features of apparitions that suggest the survival hypothesis which PseudoSkeptics do not take into account in their hypotheses and refuse to include in their data: http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=117

For more on NDE's, this website has the most extensive information I've ever seen on the web: www.near-death.com. Also look for books by authors such as Kenneth Ring, Melvin Morse, Raymond Moody, and PMH Atwater. In PMH Atwater's book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences*, she writes of Blackmore's Dying Brain Hypothesis:

> "A parapsychologist at the time of her original work but now focusing on psychological research, Blackmore has written one of the most influential books on the near-death experience - *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences* - in which she presents a detailed version of the dying brain theory. Her aim is to provide a materialistic interpretation of near-death states.
>
> Blackmore's theory is too complex to present in its entirety here, but the following is a summary of it:
>
> - Anoxia can cause the occurrences of hearing music (by stimulating the cochlear region of the ear), seeing tunnels, and seeing a light.
> - An inordinate release of endorphins at the time of death are the source of the euphoria associated with a near-death episode.
> - The actions of endorphins and neurotransmitters cause such cerebral structures as the hippocampus (associated with memory) o release stored memories, resulting in the life review.
> - The sense of timelessness is the result of the breakdown of one's sense of self at death (the self being the basis upon which we distinguish moments of time).
>
> To respond to each of these points is not necessary. Instead, we can offer a rebuttal to the whole by quoting Dr. Kenneth Ring's criticism from his excellent review of Blackmore's book in the Journal of Near-Death Studies (Winter 1995, p. 123): "Does the brain state associated with the onset of an NDE explain the

> experience or does it merely afford access to it?" In other words, although many (all?) of the near-death-related phenomena may be traceable to our body's responses to dying, does that mean that those responses explain the phenomena, or do they simply provide us with an interesting way of talking about them?
>
> There is no answer.
>
> To see this, consider the popular Psych 101 experiment of imagining that you're eating a lemon. Make that experience as vivid, as sensory-rich as you can. If you imagine it strongly enough, you'll taste the tartness and you'll begin to salivate - despite there not being any lemon in your mouth. So the imagination can produce the identical physical responses as an "objective" experience. Does this mean, then, that when you're eating a real lemon, it's not the lemon but your imagination that's producing the physical sensations you're having?
>
> Well, we know the answer to that."

SCEPCOP member Travis Basinger lists here a host of features of apparitions which suggests that consciousness may exist separate from the body/brain that PseudoSkeptics do not take into account in their hypotheses and refuse to include in their data:
http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=117

Dr. Jeffrey Long, author of *Evidence of the Afterlife* and webmaster of NDERF.org, has studied 1300 NDE cases for 20 years. In this interview, he presents 9 lines of evidence that indicate that NDE's are proof of an afterlife.

Part 1 of 3:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=um9GjWkM5kw

Also listen to his interview on Skeptiko here:

http://www.skeptiko.com/jeffrey_long_takes_on_critics_of_evidence_of_the_afterlife/

To read more on NDE's, see the following.

Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience by Kenneth Ring

http://www.melvinmorse.com/light.htm - The website of Near Death Experience researcher and pediatrician Dr. Melvin Morse, M.D.

http://www.near-death.com - A site with a comprehensive list of articles on the Near Death experience representing many viewpoints.

http://www.nderf.org - The largest database of NDE stories and articles.

http://www.iands.org/journal.html - Journal of Near-Death Studies

http://www.iands.org/ - International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS)

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/whoswho/vanLommel.htm - Medical Evidence for NDEs by Pim van Lommel, in reply to a "Skeptic" article by Michael Shermer, presents strong scientific evidence for the reality of Near Death Experiences.

Here are some video presentations and documentaries on NDE's:

Near Death Experiences: An Indepth Examination of Veridical Evidence & The Rebuttal of Common Skeptical Explanations – presents point by point arguments that NDE's are a nonphysical phenomenon.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIJXUi-z3Oc

CBS news story on NDE's, presenting both sides

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tx3b2e1ZyQ8

News report on NDE's:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBIoBJAolhk

Dr. Victor Zammit argues that NDE's are real:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16lQ3gWBPQk

People who had a near death experience and saw Heaven and have returned!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsV2oWL0bK0

Moving NDE accounts. The second account of the business tycoon was moving, and especially fascinating was the woman blind from birth who could see during her NDE!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsV2oWL0bK0

NDE's: Heaven and Hell accounts

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn5Ob7UGJOk
A great BBC documentary on NDE's, presenting both sides:

Part 1 of 6: http://youtube.com/watch?v=_I9-XxBAEsQ

Argument # 24: Consciousness is neurologically based, dependent on brain and does not survive physical death.

Now, this may or may not be true. The controversial subject of NDE's is not conclusive. The tricky thing about truth is that no matter what belief system you subscribe to, you will always discover new data that does not fit into your belief system. This is the case with many controversial subjects. Thus I must conclude that we can only glimpse fragments of truth and that at a higher level, truth is not describable in words nor comprehensible to our finite minds. But that's the beauty of the search for truth, that there is always something new to discover.

That being said, the pseudoskeptics definitely have fixed belief systems against the paranormal that are resistant to change (regardless of how open minded they may claim to be). And as such, they deny and ridicule any new data that doesn't fit into it without seriously considering it. Thus they are prosecutors, not investigators.

Such is the case with NDE's. There are many NDE accounts that do not fit the brain oxygen deprivation hypothesis, nor any other mundane explanation other than that consciousness survives death, as explained in Argument # 23.

Victor Zammit, a retired Australian lawyer, provides multiple lines of evidence for the Afterlife (NDE's, Spirits, Ghosts, Seances, Electronic Voice Phenomenon, Channeling, etc) in his website and free ebook which you can download here: http://www.victorzammit.com

I recommend you download his free ebook at the link above, and sign up for his mailing list for the latest updates on Afterlife Research. Zammit is a very passionate researcher who is worth following.

He has publicly issued his own million dollar challenge to anyone who can refute his afterlife evidence, to counter that of paranormal debunker James Randi: http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/challenge.html

His rebuttals to skeptics and debunkers can be found here: http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/index.html

See Victor Zammit's YouTube channel which contains videos about the Afterlife here: http://www.youtube.com/victorzammit

Here are some other links to look up:

- The Near Death Experience Research Foundation contains the largest database of NDE cases: http://www.nderf.org/

- The International Survivalist Society contains news, articles, and research on life after death: http://www.survivalafterdeath.org/home.htm

- Survival After Death - Campaign for Philosophical Freedom: http://www.cfpf.org.uk/ - Compiled by Michael Roll, who has been a long-time UK campaigner for study of the Afterlife to be treated as a branch of physics and for unbiased media reporting of afterlife research. His site contains many useful articles and links. One of the best articles on there is "The Scientific Proof of Survival After Death": http://www.cfpf.org.uk/articles/background/scientificproof/scientificproof1.html

- Finally, as mentioned in Argument # 16, Dr. Gary Schwartz of The Human Energy Lab of Tucson University has done a series of experiments on mediumship which gave overwhelming results. See his book *The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death*. His website is at: http://www.openmindsciences.com/

Argument # 25: Spiritual experiences only exist in your mind, not in external reality.

Since no one knows all that exists in all of reality, including skeptics, no one can say with infallible authority what exists and what doesn't. Even if we take something out of fantasy like unicorns and dragons, for instance, we don't know that those type of creatures don't exist in the trillions of other planets in the universe since we haven't even been to any others beside our own. Furthermore, string theory in physics suggest that there may be many dimensions, which if true may suggest other planes or levels of reality that we don't understand yet. These other levels of reality could contain creatures or beings that we can't even imagine, even unicorns and dragons. Even arch skeptic James Randi has said that to say that something doesn't exist is an extraordinary claim (though he has contradicted himself on this).

Therefore, this is another unqualified pseudoskeptical statement based on their biases and prejudices, not based on objectivity. We simply don't know many things, and neither do they. The difference is, we admit it, whereas they won't.

Argument # 26: Paranormal beliefs are childish fantasies for dealing with a cold uncaring world.

This is another biased statement of belief. Most psychic experiences don't come as fantasies or wishful thinking, but as firsthand direct experiences. Often the experiencer doesn't even choose to have them in the first place, as in the accounts of those who have sudden NDE's or OBE's. Mature adults who are not childish in attitude or behavior have had paranormal or psychic experiences. There are also many rational, down-to-earth people (both mentally and physically) who believe in God too. In addition, even if a belief or religion is used to cope with life, that doesn't mean that the belief or religion is totally false. If it works, then there is something real to it, one way or another, on this plane or another. (See similar rebuttal in Argument # 14)

Also, consider this. Belief in God is innate, as these studies show.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article6823229.ece
http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2008/nov/25/religion-children-god-belief
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/3512686/Children-are-born-believers-in-God-academic-claims.html

We are born with a natural belief in God and the spiritual, and are more prone as children to believing in "fantasies". When we become adults, some of us turn into Atheists, yes. But in old age, most people end up concluding after a whole lifetime of experiences, that there is "something out there" beyond the physical, some guiding consciousness, and that "everything happens for a reason".

One might argue that they are just looking for a reason to believe in life after death as they near the end of it. But fear is never sustainable as a prime motivator in any belief. These folks are basing their conclusions on a bigger picture view of life they've obtained after connecting so many dots in the events of their lives. Plus it could be that as one approaches death, one becomes more attuned with the "metaphysical realm" that they originally came from, as they did when they were children coming out of it, and so move toward a different consciousness again. This might

explain why children and elderly adults tend to be less uptight and more easy going than young to middle age adults.

Either way, we should be focusing on the experiences and evidence of these many people, rather than trying to ridicule and judge them with biased accusatory terms which contribute nothing in the search for truth.

Argument # 27: There is no evidence to support the existence of UFO's or Aliens.

See Argument # 2, point 7.

You may also find these testimonials at press conferences by high ranking government, military and intelligence officials confessing their knowledge of government involvement in UFO's to be highly convincing.

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2001
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vyVe-6YdUk

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2010
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtmpaM0PqyI

Also see James Fox's compelling UFO films *Out of the Blue* and *I Know What I Saw* which you can see on YouTube.

Argument # 28: Evolution is sufficient to explain the origin of life, so God is not needed.

This is more of a religion than reality. Evolution has only been proven at the micro level, not the macro level. While small changes within a species have been demonstrated and observed, the theory that one species can transition to another has never been proven in any way.

The truth is, there are huge gaps and missing links in the current model of Evolution. No transitional species have been found that links humans to the prehistoric hominids or primates. And the transitions that allegedly took place, if it did, was way too quick to be natural.

Humans are also not equipped to survive in the wilderness of nature and cannot compete with the wild animals there in terms of physical strength and adaptability. Thus they could not have evolved naturally in the wild through Evolution alone. Our biological human physique is obvious evidence of this. Furthermore, no human fossils dating back beyond 200,000 years has ever been found. Moreover, the makeup of our genes contain many clues and bits of data that does not fit into the Evolutionary model. (see the presentation below by Lloyd Pye for details) And of course, science cannot explain how life began at all or how the first cell became self-replicating. Even Richard Dawkins, the most famous staunch advocate of Evolution, admits this. (see the end of the Ben Stein film below for Dawkins' confession)

These unexplained mysteries and discrepancies have never been solved by the scientific establishment. Instead, they are just brushed under the carpet, denied and given copout explanations and leaps of faith arguments. The scientific establishment has too much invested in its current paradigm to change its mind or rethink its theories. They also ridicule and ostracize dissent so that scientists are required to tow the party line in order to keep their careers and be promoted. In other words, freethought or questioning is not allowed. In short, they've created a "forced consensus" that is run by pressure and punishment, rather than freethought.

To see an excellent documentary that explores the suppression of "intelligent design" in the scientific establishment and universities, see Ben Stein's revealing film "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" on YouTube here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj8xyMsbkO4

Now, I do not claim to have all the answers to such mysteries. But there are some researchers who have invested a lot of time in this subject that are worth listening to. One such example is Lloyd Pye, a tireless anthropology researcher who has pioneered what he calls an "Intervention Theory". See this outstanding presentation by Pye: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNGngZsxAhw

For more info, see Lloyd Pye's website and book Everything You Know Is Wrong.
http://www.lloydpye.com

Now, even if micro Evolution is true, it does not rule out the existence of God or a cosmic universal consciousness. Greg Stone, author of *Under the Tree*, put it eloquently on my discussion list:

> "Not only is there a residue of feeling, but there is a sound argument that Darwinian evolution is not big enough. It is not. Darwinian evolution deals with the specific nature of the evolution of biological forms on this planet. And it fails to account entirely even for that realm. It does not account for the overall evolution of complexity within the universe, which then leads to the "special case" of Darwinian evolution. It does not account for the origin of life forms, and most importantly it in no way accounts for the existence of the spirit and the spirit's effect upon the evolution of forms. Thus, Darwinian Evolution is incomplete when it comes to explaining life. And those, like Dawkins, Blackmore, Pinker, etc. who try to make Darwinian Evolution do more than it can will be seen in the long run to have been quite foolish."

Some researchers have argued that it is mathematically impossible for life to evolve by chance on its own because of the astronomical impossibility of the conditions for life being set up by chance. Theist J.P. Moreland presented the arguments for this, using math and science, in his debate against Atheist Kai Neilsen, described in the book *Does God Exist?: The Debate Between Theists & Atheists*. In his debate with

Atheist Kai Neilsen, Moreland explains with math and science why chance alone could not explain how the conditions for life evolved.

One thing the Atheists can never explain is *“Who set up the vastly improbable default conditions for life to evolve in the FIRST PLACE? Where did the matter to create the universe and life come from? How did something come from nothing?”* It’s kind of like this: We know the mechanics behind how and why a pot boils, but that doesn’t tell us about the person who put the pot on the stove.

Some Atheists also like to point out that the need for belief in God can also be explained by Evolution. However, David Marshall, a Christian missionary and philosopher rebuts that point well when he stated in my discussion list:

> “To make the jump from "evolution can explain belief in God" to "there is no God" without involved argument would be the generic fallacy, again. To repeat my earlier example, even if you can explain the human ability to do math by evolution, that does not prove math is invalid. In theory, it should be possible (given your presuppositions) to show how the human faculty for mathematics arose through natural processes. That does not mean E=MC2 does not accurately describe real events in the real universe. The fact that evolution may have created an awareness of dependency on one's mother on a child's part, does not mean real mothers do not exist and do not care for their children. In the same way, even if you were able to describe the evolution of faith in God, it would still remain an entirely separate argument, whether God exists in fact or not.”

Argument # 29: Atheists don't claim that God doesn't exist. They lack belief in God. The burden of proof for God is on the Theist, not the Atheist.

This is a technicality that Atheists use to try to put the burden on the other side. They claim that since "A-theism" means "without a belief in God", they are not claiming anything and therefore do not have to prove anything. Thus, they claim, the burden of proof is on the Theist, who claims that God exists.

However, this makes little difference either way because their core philosophy toward God is still the same. Deep down, they believe that there is no God, and they know it. The reason why they emphasize this is to try to put themselves in an unattackable position. It's a semantic ploy. To try to be consistent with it, they will say "There is no evidence for God" rather than "God doesn't exist", but sometimes they slip up.

They can't really prove that God doesn't exist because you can't prove a negative. Regardless, the Atheist obviously believes deep down that there isn't a God or deity anyway, which is prevalent in their attempts to debunk and refute every single argument for the existence of God. Therefore this trivial debate about the implications of the word "Atheism" seems pointless in substance.

For some critiques of Atheist arguments, see these links:

"How to respond to a Supercilious Atheist":
http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/01/how_to_respond_to_a_supercilio.html

"The Irrational Atheists", has a free ebook you can download:
http://www.irrationalatheist.com

Argument # 30: The James Randi Million Dollar Challenge argument.

In case you don't know, James Randi is the most celebrated of the organized skeptics who founded the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF). Skilled and versed in the art of stage magic, Mr. Randi claims to be better able to detect fraud and trickery from psychics and mediums better than scientists can. He gives speeches attempting to "educate" (or brainwash rather, in my view) the public about psychics and paranormal phenomena, which he claims is all deception or self-delusion. He has written books such as *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural* and *Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions*, made a PBS documentary called "Secrets of the Psychics", attacked the reputation of psychics and healers such as Israeli-born spoon bender Uri Geller, debated with psychics on CNN's Larry King Live, etc.

In the original version of this book back in 2001, I decided not to address this argument because I didn't like to create whole arguments against specific individuals. However, at this point the infamous James Randi and his supporters have made it practically unavoidable. He is so deeply publicly involved in debunking parapsychology in the media, that to ignore him would be tantamount to ignoring Darth Vader in Star Wars. Paranormal debunkers now commonly use Randi's psychic challenge to argue that there are no genuine paranormal or psychic abilities, else they would apply for the challenge and win. Therefore, in this new edition of this book, I've had to add a section on it as it is one of the most often mentioned arguments by organized skeptics.

There are many obvious problems with this argument of course, since one magician with an axe to grind and hosting a publicity stunt does not debunk all the paranormal experiences in the world. They still happen everyday to people all over the world. Randi's critics claim is mostly a publicity stunt for his career due to the fact that 1) Randi is extremely selective in who he tests, preferring to only test famous names to boost his own career, and that 2) there are many applicants who received no response after applying. Plus, based on numerous testimonials from challenge applicants and para-researchers, there is much circumstantial

evidence that Randi is not that honest, for he has used plenty of deceptive and dishonest tactics in the past. There are many reports and analyses of him that indicate this and damage his credibility. I've provided a list of them below so you can research them yourself.

- The Myth of the Randi Challenge by the Daily Grail, points out a list of events that show how Randi keeps the challenge unwon by raising the bar to impossible and unreasonable standards, and using other dishonest sleight-of-hand tactics. http://www.dailygrail.com/features/the-myth-of-james-randis-million-dollar-challenge

- Randi Backs out of Challenge with Homeopath George Vitalhoukas, reneging on a long term agreement. I guess when someone's about to win, he gets scared and finds excuses not to go through with it. http://www.naturalnews.com/025627.html

- The Randi Challenge – A thorough analysis by Michael Prescott http://michaelprescott.typepad.com/michael_prescotts_blog/2006/12/the_challenge.html

- Randi caught lying on several assertions by telepathy researcher Rupert Sheldrake http://www.sheldrake.org/controversies/randi.html

- Victor Zammit, a lawyer who presents the case for the afterlife, has a critique and counter to the Randi Challenge at: http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/reward.html His video exposing the Randi Challenge is here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_91wrhZhTFE

- My friend Michael Goodspeed recently also wrote a great article detailing the hypocrisy of Randi and his challenge, which you can read at: http://www.rense.com/general50/james.htm.

- Psychic Challenge - An article challenging James Randi to live up to his repeated assertion that if adequate evidence of a paranormal reality could be demonstrated to him, he would be happy to

acknowledge it and pay the one million dollar prize to the claimant. Includes accounts of Randi's shortcomings and mistakes. http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/controversies/Keen_psychicchallenge.htm (You can read Randi's response to it at: http://www.randi.org/jr/091903.html)

- Flim-Flam Flummery: A Skeptical Look at James Randi - A comprehensive article by Michael Prescott which investigates, analyzes and exposes many errors and mistakes Randi made in his book *Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions*. Includes a response by Randi, followed by Prescott's rebuttal and analysis of the disputed issues. http://michaelprescott.freeservers.com/FlimFlam.htm

- Montague Keen's challenges to Mr. Randi to live up to his pledges and promises regarding the million dollar challenge: http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/randi.htm http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/jamesrandi.htm

- Discussion on Jeff Rense - Michael Roll discusses radio shows where Randi was defeated and shamed in debate against qualified scientists, which didn't reach the public, possibly due to Randi's doing. http://www.rense.com/general32/randi.htm

- Darryl Sloan, a balanced freethinker and telekinesis researcher with a large following on YouTube, explains in this video why faith in the Randi Challenge is irrational: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujqVwcZg_mA (his channel contains many high quality well thought-out videos: http://www.youtube.com/darrylsloan)

A cursory look at Randi's articles on his website www.randi.org will reveal to any objective observer that although this man is very good at playing intellectual gymnastics in his commentaries and debates. He will do whatever it takes to win, even committing foul play. There is no question that his mind is made up and that he has an axe to grind.

In addition, Randi seems to have a tendency to distort facts for his purposes. For instance, Harold Puthoff, a researcher at Stanford

Research Institute (SRI) which is famous for conducting experiments on remote viewing and Uri Geller's psychic abilities, told me in an email:

> "<< All the skeptics I've debated said that the SRI tests were totally discredited and debunked already. Is this true? >>
>
> Not true at all. They just quote Randi and his pronouncements, e.g., in his book Flim Flam. In Flim Flam, he gives something like 28 debunking points, if my memory serves me correctly. I had the opportunity to confront Randi at a Parapsychology Association conference with proof in hand, and in tape-recorded interaction he admitted he was wrong on all the points. He even said he would correct them for the upcoming paperback being published by the CSICOP group. (He did not.)
>
> In case one thinks that it was just a case of our opinions vs. his opinions, we chose for the list of incorrect points only those that could be independently verified. Examples: He said that in our Nature paper we verified Geller's metal-bending. Go to the paper, and you see that we said we were not able to obtain evidence for this. He said that a film of the Geller experiment made at SRI by famed photographer Zev Pressman was not made by him, but by us and we just put his name on it. We showed up with an affidavit by Pressman saying that indeed he did make the film. Etc., etc.
>
> Hal Puthoff"

And telepathy researcher Rupert Sheldrake caught Randi lying on several instances about him:

> http://www.sheldrake.org/D&C/controversies/randi.html
>
> "James Randi - a Conjurer Attempts to Debunk Research on Animals
>
> The January 2000 issue of Dog World magazine included an article on a possible sixth sense in dogs, which discussed some of my research. In this article Randi was quoted as saying that in relation to canine ESP, "We at the JREF [James Randi Educational

> Foundation] have tested these claims. They fail." No details were given of these tests.
>
> I emailed James Randi to ask for details of this JREF research. He did not reply. He ignored a second request for information too.
>
> I then asked members of the JREF Scientific Advisory Board to help me find out more about this claim. They did indeed help by advising Randi to reply. In an email sent on Februaury 6, 2000 he told me that the tests he referred to were not done at the JREF, but took place "years ago" and were "informal". They involved two dogs belonging to a friend of his that he observed over a two-week period. All records had been lost. He wrote: "I overstated my case for doubting the reality of dog ESP based on the small amount of data I obtained. It was rash and improper of me to do so."
>
> Randi also claimed to have debunked one of my experiments with the dog Jaytee, a part of which was shown on television. Jaytee went to the window to wait for his owner when she set off to come home, but did not do so before she set off. In Dog World, Randi stated: "Viewing the entire tape, we see that the dog responded to every car that drove by, and to every person who walked by." This is simply not true, and Randi now admits that he has never seen the tape."

So, if he lies, then why should anyone trust him in playing fairly in a million dollar challenge?

In his article CSICOP and the Skeptics: An Overview George Hansen cites in his footnotes a damaging admission from Randi:

> http://www.tricksterbook.com/ArticlesOnline/CSICOPoverview.htm
> "25 Randi's antics should have come as no surprise to members of CSICOP because he has engaged in similar behavior in relation to psi research. Krippner (1977), Rao (1984), Targ and Puthoff (1977, pp. 182-186), and Tart (1982b) have all documented glaring errors of Randi. Dennis Stillings has demonstrated that "Randi is capable of gross distortion of facts" (Truzzi, 1987, p. 89). Randi has been quoted as saying, "I *always* have an out" with regard to his $10,000 challenge (Rawlins, 1981, p. 89). Puthoff and Targ (1977)

> documented a number of mistakes. In a published, handwritten, signed letter, Randi replied offering $1,000 if any claimed error could be demonstrated (see Fuller, 1979). Fuller proved Randi wrong. In a rejoinder to Puthoff and Targ (1977), Randi reversed himself (for a clear example, see point number 15 in Randi, 1982, p. 223). Randi should have paid the $1,000, but he never did."

In response to Mr. Randi's million dollar psychic challenge charade, Dr. Zammit has issued a million dollar counter-challenge to skeptics to disprove the afterlife evidence detailed in his book A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife. You can read the details of this challenge at: http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/challenge.html

In any case, I would say in conclusion that regardless of whether Randi's psychic challenge is legit, I do not believe the fact that it is officially unwon to constitute proof that paranormal and psychic phenomena don't exist, as some debunkers claim. Simply put, there are a variety of reasons why it would still be unwon, ranging from Randi's own dishonesty and less than sincere motives, to tricks like perpetually raising the bar, as well as the spiritual principle that psychic abilities used for selfish motives or profit disconnect one from the higher source they emanate from. Furthermore, if you also pit the argument of the unwon challenge against the overwhelming anecdotal (majority population) and scientific evidence for psychic phenomena, it's nothing in comparison. **Simply put, one unwon public challenge by a debunker and magician does NOT invalidate the countless millions of paranormal experiences throughout world history, nor does it refute the years of replicable psi research done by Ganzfeld or PEAR experiments, among others.**

Finally, in regard to CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), one revealing thing needs to be said. Former CSICOP staff member Dennis Rawlins resigned after finding hard evidence of CSICOP intentionally suppressing its own findings which supported astrology (known as the "file drawer effect") during one of their initial investigations of Michel Gauquelin's statistical research, thus proving the organization's true agenda was simply to discredit/debunk in any way possible rather than to find the truth, in order to appease its subscribers. You can read Rawlins' report "sTARBABY" at http://cura.free.fr/xv/14starbb.html. CSICOP has maintained of course, that it was all just a big misunderstanding. But what else do you expect

them to say? Mr. Rawlins' findings seem to be very sincere and unambiguous.

Also, for an in-depth analysis of CSICOP, see this article: http://www.tricksterbook.com/ArticlesOnline/CSICOPoverview.htm

And speaking of astrology, skeptic and debunker Michael Shermer set up a double blind test for Astrologer Jeffrey Armstrong, who passed with flying colors, scoring a major victory for the validity of astrology. You can see the video clip of this test here, which includes a surprise twist at the end: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N1dIUTbZTo

Why Randi, Shermer and the CSICOPers are not Real Skeptics

James Randi, Michael Shermer and the CSICOPers are highly selective with their skepticism. Not only do they not question their own beliefs, but they never challenge or apply skepticism to the status quo. Instead, they have a fanatical allegiance to it, evidenced by their behavior. A true skeptic examines all sides, including his own. But pseudoskeptics only point their skepticism at what they don't believe in, which everyone else does too. So what makes them different than anyone else then? Only one thing: **The SIDE they're on**. In this case, they are on the side of authority, orthodoxy and materialism. That is why their skepticism and critical examination is ONLY directed at anything and anyone that challenges the status quo, but NEVER at the status quo itself. In essence, that makes them "establishment defenders" (or establishment whores), not real skeptics.

That is why you will never see Randi, Shermer or the CSICOP crowd apply any skepticism, criticism or condemnation toward orthodoxy or establishment. They hold that side to be blameless and infallible, not overtly, but by their selective skepticism. And they take on faith anything that the establishment says as true, with zero skepticism. In other words, the official version of everything is ALWAYS the truth to them, and never to be questioned. You can see this in ALL their publications, writings, interviews and speeches, where the official version of anything is NEVER questioned. Instead, one side is always right to them (the official version, materialistic paradigm) and the other always wrong (paranormal or

conspiratorial claims). Simply put, their skepticism can never be used to question the status quo, only to defend it.

Now, what kind of skepticism or critical thinking is that? Is that the mark of a freethinker or truth seeker? I don't think so.

This is why not only are they against all validity of the paranormal, but also against all claims of conspiracy as well, which are not even paranormal in nature. In their view, anyone that challenges the system or the official version is automatically discredited, regardless of whether their claims are true, credible or backed by evidence. And this includes former high ranking government officials as well.

For those of you who have followed the work of Randi, Shermer or CSICOP, ask yourself this: Have you ever seen them criticize anything of the establishment, including crimes, murders, lies, conspiracies, evil plots, etc?

I'll bet not.

Consider the following documented facts and let me ask you:

Do they ever speak out against the senseless killings in the Iraq War for power and profit?

Nope.

Do they ever admit that the US Navy was wrong to fake the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964 (which has now been exposed) which resulted in the deaths of 60,000 Americans and millions of Vietnamese, making the war and their deaths a FRAUD?

Nope.

Are they outraged with the fact that the CIA has been involved in drug trafficking for many years, which even some in the mainstream media have reported? Or the CIA assassinations of foreign leaders who refused to abide by US policy?

Nope.

Are they outraged that the EPA lied after 9/11 that the air was safe to breathe, which caused thousands of First Responders to develop cancer from the toxic air and slowly die?

Nope.

Are they outraged that upper levels of government have concocted secret plots to sacrifice innocent lives to stage terrorist activities and blame it on others to start wars, such as Operation Northwoods and Operation Dirty Trick? (Google them for more info)

Nope.

Do they speak out against the thousands of people that die from pharmaceutical drugs every year?

Nope.

But will they go ballistic if ONE person allegedly dies from alternative treatment such as homeopathy?

You betcha!

So, what does it say about them then if they have no problem with lies and evil plots that result in the death of millions, yet have a big problem with the death of a few if alternative medicine is involved?

It tells you that they are one sided with an axe to grind, rather than fair, honest or objective. They are fanatical defenders of establishment and orthodoxy, holding that side to be blameless. As such they are totally blind to the faults of authority, or deliberately ignore them at least. Their critical thinking and skepticism can ONLY be directed at anything AGAINST the establishment, and NEVER at anything FROM the establishment.

Tell that to the pseudoskeptics. And when they deny it, challenge them to produce a publication from a media skeptic or skeptic organization that openly condemns or criticizes the above crimes of the establishment (elite or shadow government, whatever you want to call it). When they

come up empty handed, then you've got them. From that point, it does not matter if they continue in their denial, for the facts speak for themselves.

Now, is that true skepticism to you? Is that objectivity, logic and science? Is that the mark of a freethinker independent of authority or bias? Or is that fanaticism from a programmed mind who has given up his intellect to become an intellectual slave of authority?

You tell me.

A REAL skeptic is able to apply skepticism to ALL SIDES, including their own. They do not hold one side to be blameless and the other to be always wrong, like the Randis, Shermers and CSICOPers do. Fanatics are always one-sided, independent free thinkers aren't.

The ability to independently assess all sides, including your own, is the mark of a true freethinking at a higher level of consciousness. These folks clearly do not fit the bill.

You gotta remember that "actions speak louder than words". Anyone can claim to be a skeptic or critical freethinker. But if their ACTIONS do not show the hallmark of one, then they aren't. And by their actions, the Randis, Shermers and CSICOPers aren't.

See my video rant about this here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0aPN3R3vPw

Conclusion

As we have seen, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalist defenders of orthodoxy, not true skeptics, open minded inquirers or objective truth seekers. They exhibit the following consistent traits:

PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics

- Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into the established order
- Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes the status quo, but never to the status quo itself
- Carries a fixed set of unchanging beliefs which all data must conform to
- Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending the views of establishment
- Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but views their own fixed viewpoints as constant
- Are willing to lie and deceive to preserve establishment views, which are their true master
- Automatically dismisses and denies all information that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy
- Is judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing about
- Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective unbiased analysis and examination
- Insists that everything unknown and unexplained must have a conventional materialistic explanation
- Uses semantics and word games with their own rules of logic to try to win arguments
- Are unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence but instead denies data which doesn't fit into them
- When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are not able to accept paranormal ones

They are **materialist fanatics,** driven by **dogmatic beliefs and views** that are fixed, which they seek to proselytize to the world, such as:

- The paranormal is impossible and ALWAYS disproven

- Everything unexplained or unknown MUST have a natural materialistic explanation
- If someone makes a paranormal claim, they MUST be wrong
- ONLY natural reductionist explanations are acceptable
- If mainstream science doesn't understand or accept something, then it MUST be false or doesn't exist.

Furthermore, they've hijacked the term skeptic for themselves and twisted it to mean the opposite of what it really means. It's a deceptive form of cloak and dagger mind control on the mass public, a disinformation campaign perhaps.

What we know for sure is that their arguments are subjective statements of belief designed to support *a priori* assumptions, rather than to seek truth. Their style of logic is designed to refute purely on philosophical grounds rather than factual grounds, which have nothing to do with rationality or reason. In fact, like fundamentalist religion, they are rigid and closed-minded to anything new or contrary, no matter how much evidence there is to support it. They are not truth seekers nor do they care about evidence or facts. All they do is ridicule and deny. Though they may claim to be open minded, their actions and behaviors reveal them to be anything but. And as you know, when one's words and actions contradict each other, the latter speaks louder.

The true skeptic should be skeptical of his own beliefs as well as of others. But these pseudoskeptics aren't. Instead they are cynics who are unable to see the flaws and limitations in their own views. Consciousness and NDE expert Greg Stone, author of *Under the Tree*, and a member of my discussion list, sums up the closed-minded skeptics' problem in an interesting way:

> "You see the subjective evaluation of a skeptic holds less weight than the subjective direct observation of the experiencer. What is needed, and sorely missing, is a real understanding of the nature and factors of subjective knowledge. Without this all such discussions will be foolhardy. The skeptic continually fails to understand and admit that he works on a subjective basis. And he seems mystified when someone accepts someone's direct observation over the skeptic's subjective evaluation."

Richard Milton of the Alternative Science website who has faced scorn and derision from skeptics himself, writes:

> http://www.alternativescience.com/skepticism.htm
>
> “There is no more honourable word in the scientific lexicon than that of 'skeptic' -- one who sincerely seeks after truth and who has the courage to rebut scientific myths and false beliefs with empirical data and sound logic……
>
> But in recent decades, 'skeptic' has come to mean something else. It has come to mean the adoption of an attitude of scorn and derision towards any kind of anomalous data that contradicts current scientific beliefs, and the adoption of an air of condescension and superiority towards those who venture to investigate or write about anomalous phenomena…….
>
> And the 'skeptics' who censor and ridicule in the name of science, whether they know it or not, are the agents not of knowledge but of pseudoscience.
>
> Science does not need vigilantes to guard its gates. Science has been successful because good science drives out bad and because an ounce of experiment is worth any amount of scientific authority.”

And former Naval Scientist Eldon Byrd, who tested spoon bender Uri Geller, rightly states:

> "What major contribution has any skeptic made to the betterment of humankind? How many Mother Teresa’s have they produced? How many great scientific discoveries have they made? Many of them are like movie critics--useless and usually wrong."

He was right of course. As someone pointed out, skeptics have contributed nothing for science, just like music critics have contributed nothing to the music genre. After all, no one ever erects a monument to a critic.

Novelist and blogger Michael Prescott described the pseudoskeptics very eloquently in his essay “Why I Am Not A Skeptic”

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/New/Examskeptics/Prescott_skeptic.html

“Their penchant for denigrating and discrediting the paranormal is not simply a tic of the personality, but the ineluctable consequence of a certain fundamental view of life, mind, and the cosmos.

Unfortunately, people with a powerful personal agenda do not make the best skeptics - at least not if skepticism is understood as the exercise of unbiased objectivity.

Self-doubt - or at least the admission of same - is not characteristic of the skeptic, who prefers to radiate an aura of unshakable assurance. To admit any doubt is to cede territory to the forces of unreason - the primordial enemy, which, as we have seen, must be resisted by any means.

And here we come to what is, as I see it, the real problem with skeptics. They wish, above all, to be certain - and when reality doesn't oblige them by offering clear-cut answers, they turn away from reality and seek refuge in pre-existing theory.

They oversimplify history as a battle between good and evil, and miss its complexities and subtleties. They resist modern developments in science and cling to outdated, nineteenth century conceptions. They jump to prearranged conclusions and shut their eyes - and their minds - to anomalous data and alternative explanations.

In their quest to prove themselves right, they lose sight of the ambiguities and paradoxes of life. In their desire to be safe and sure, they turn away from anything interesting and new.

They are creatures of comfort and routine, not explorers. They cannot think outside the box. They will, in fact, deny that there is or ever could be anything outside the box - and they'll heap scorn on anyone who suggests otherwise. They'll call names, cry fraud, and holler that civilization is in danger and the barbarians are at the gates. They'll do anything, really - except examine their own

assumptions with a remotely critical eye.

And that's why I'm not a skeptic."

One might wonder why these closed-minded debunkers do what they do, and what motivates them, for it certainly isn't truth. Articles have been written which speculate about this (see the list of links below), but we can't really generalize here and apply one explanation to them all. One explanation though, seems to ring true as a factor. Brian Zeiler writes in his article The Logical Trickery of the UFO Skeptic:

> http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc265.htm
> "Skeptics are mostly scientists, but that certainly doesn't mean they behave scientifically, as has been explained. Their behavior stems partially from their distaste for public opinions that contradict the consensus of the scientific community. When a public consensus does contradict the scientific opinion, the scientists will mount a public campaign to discredit this opinion, because such an opinion undermines the role of the scientist in society as the appointed knowledge-seeker and truth-gatherer. What good are scientists if mankind will only insist on believing in warm, fuzzy superstitions anyway? So, these scientists who are guilty of the logical infractions exposed in this essay are so consumed with the presumed validity of their opinions that, like a zealous religious fanatic, they must convert the masses to the side of truth in order to salvage their own self-image."

Here is another explanation from the vantage point of a mystic named FaithRada:

> "Of course the best way to know phenomena such as Clairvoyance, mental telepathy and Astral travel etc., is to have the direct validating experience for one's self.
> Truly? if I were a skeptic... and I was one, that is the ONLY way to really Know. What good is belief OR disbelief here? One SHOULD hold out for actual Direct Experience before any judgment is passed. In fact .. repeated, validated incidences are often necessary, to rid the mind of its blocks... depending on the resistance one holds for the idea of an expanded reality in the first place.

Which brings me to the main point why more ardent skeptics/cynics always insist these events MUST BE frauds and/or ignorant misunderstandings. FEAR Fear in the sense that if these events are recognized as valid then their whole world .. based on certain laws of logic and the way this world SEEMS to work ..would be destroyed. So, better not to look too deeply. they LIKE their world the way THEY have come to understand it. ... neat, orderly, dependable... But the question begs.. **Who's** sense of law and order, orderliness and dependability? To the finite mind there is always chaos lurking around the bend. To the infinite mind there is no chaos at all... but that is a huge leap for the individual mind to take. The contracted mind creates a chasm and then fears it will fall into it. Amazing yes?

Everything these "hard core" skeptics/cynics have based their reality on, as to what IS real, indeed.. who THEY even ARE ... would suddenly be invalidated and the reality they base their very existence on would suddenly have no meaning. This is to be avoided at all cost ... and so they make sure ALL claims are fraudulent or misunderstood by duped minds. This is their protection mode and they are unlikely to be shaken from it. Instead they need an "inner" shift.. which will allow them to recognize a higher order of things. No shift? No undertanding.

After a while, for those who CAN allow a shift, a new stability does come if they can survive the mental fall.. but in the moment.. the universe would appear to be beyond chaotic. They are like babies in the womb.. not yet quite ready for a whole NEW reality.

& & &

When one begins to "recognize" that their visions are indeed of valid "future" events, *and so TimeandSpace are NOT exactly the "set in stone" reality they thought them to be* ... it can initially throw one into a great turmoil… especially if they had assumed such events were... unlikely to be possible... before this. *note..(if a mind believes something to be indeed impossible.. then they will not receive the validating experiences which are crucial to this knowing since their mind is now actively censoring it from them, at their request.)

> The more one believes these realities to be improbable, the more turmoil and trauma they will experience... until the mind simply blocks it all out. This is why no matter how much evidence is trotted out... it is like a blind man looking at the moon… they will experience nothing ... they are simply not able to because of their current mind set of disbelief."

Yet here is still a more simpler speculation on what motivates these pseudoskeptics, from one of my readers:

> "I sometimes wonder if the debunker or pseudoskeptic mentality results from what might be termed the "Santa Claus Syndrome." That is, these debunkers were so traumatized in their youth by finding out there was no Santa Claus that they made up their minds then that they would never again be duped by anyone. They figured that if they were duped by their parents on Santa Claus they must have also been duped on God. They became polarized in their thinking, i.e., "From now on, I have to see it to believe it," and got stuck in that paradigm. Thus, the tendency for debunkers to throw out the Santa Claus analogy is a result of their own childhood trauma at learning there is no Santa Claus. Perhaps there was some unusual trust issue with their parents that prompted the syndrome. It would be interesting if someone could research this, but it would be an impossible project because they wouldn't admit to certain shortcomings. They would understand where the study was going and attempt to skew it toward the intelligent and rational explanation."

Nevertheless, perhaps there is yet hope for pseudoskeptics and debunkers. Recently, a famous career skeptic named Susan Blackmore, author of *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences* conceded that her prior conclusions about the non-existence of psi were unwarranted after all. This is amazing because career skeptics in general never like to admit to being wrong. After all, they have their career and self-pride among their colleagues riding on their back to give it all up just to end up being wrong. Therefore, her admission is very brave and admirable. And the way she explains her concession is so refreshingly honest, that all skeptics, both open-minded and closed-minded, should learn from it and take heed. In an article for the Skeptical Inquirer, she writes:

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/anomalistics/skeptic_research.htm

"How could I weigh my own results against the results of other people, bearing in mind that mine tended to be negative ones while everyone else's tended to be positive ones? I had to find some kind of balance here. At one extreme I could not just believe my own results and ignore everyone else's…. At the other extreme I could not believe everyone else's results and ignore my own. That would be even more pointless. There would have been no point in all those years of experiments if I didn't take my own results seriously." (emphasis added)

In another article she wrote:

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/anomalistics/skeptic_research.htm

"The other major challenge to the skeptic's position is, of course, the fact that opposing positive evidence exists in the parapsychological literature. I couldn't dismiss it all. This raises an interesting question: Just how much weight can you or should you give the results of your own experiments over those of other people? On the one hand, your own should carry more weight, since you know exactly how they were done… On the other hand, science is necessarily a collective enterprise…. So I couldn't use my own failures as justifiable evidence that psi does not exist. I had to consider everyone else's success."

"At last, I've done it. I've thrown in the towel.

Come to think of it, I feel slightly sad. It was just over thirty years ago that I had the dramatic out-of-body experience that convinced me of the reality of psychic phenomena… Just a few years of careful experiments changed all that. I found no psychic phenomena… I became a sceptic.(emphasis added).

So why didn't I give up then? There are lots of bad reasons. Admitting you are wrong is always hard, even though it's a skill every scientist needs to learn. And starting again as a baby in a new field is a daunting prospect. So is losing all the status and power of

> being an expert. I have to confess I enjoyed my hard-won knowledge.
>
> …None of it ever gets anywhere. That's a good enough reason for leaving.
>
> But perhaps the real reason is that I am just too tired - and tired above all of working to maintain an open mind. I couldn't dismiss all those extraordinary claims out of hand. After all, they just might be true…"

Closed-minded skeptics should pay close attention to the underlined parts above. They reflect how a true skeptic should think.

Now let me clarify again that I am not some gullible believer who believes in every wacky item under the umbrella term "the paranormal" out there, such as crystals, channeling, Loch Ness Monster, Bermuda Triangle, etc. Most of these paranormal mysteries lack good incontrovertible evidence, and their evidence is scanty and ambiguous to make any judgments. And some of course, have too much damaging evidence against them that they are hardly worth investigating anymore. Others are simply too controversial to know either way.

Therefore, it was never my intention to be a defender for all paranormal phenomena in general, only in the proposition that they should be considered. In fact, I am very skeptical myself, and not quick to believe something unless I have good reasons to. I am very cautious by nature and do not believe everything I hear, contrary to what skeptics often charge me with. My position is that the evidence for any paranormal phenomenon should be CONSIDERED and INVESTIGATED (with an attitude of searching for the truth, not with an agenda) rather than rejected automatically because it doesn't fit in with convention. Now, I do not claim to have the answers to all the paranormal mysteries either. No one does. However, based on my experience, research, and the overwhelming totality of anecdotal reports, here are my conclusions.

1) The evidence presented in this book to refute the main skeptical arguments demonstrates that at least some kind of metaphysical reality exists. The nature and scope of that is yet to be discovered, as well as the implications. We have only begun to discover its existence through

quantum physics, scientific experiments, new research into mind/body connections, etc.

2) The overwhelming anecdotal evidence from at least half the world, discoveries in quantum physics, credible scientific experiments, and new research into mind/body connections indicate that at least certain phenomenon are real in the sense that they have actual unimagined effects – telepathy, ESP, psychic abilities in general, and ghosts. The widespread anecdotal evidence for these phenomena alone indicates that statistically they are very likely to point to something real. In other words, there is something to them beside hallucination, fraud, or misperception.

Similarly, as one man on a paranormal list concluded, one does not have to have mystical experiences to conclude that something real is going on here:

> “One additional thought about waiting for a mystical experience to awaken oneself. As I said, it's not all that easy for some of us. There are many who might wait and wait and never have one. I have had a few marginal mystical experiences, but nothing that would have changed my thinking had I been a closed-minded skeptic, debunker, pseudoskeptic, scientific fundamentalist, whatever name we choose to give to such a person. I have never had a near-death experience, but I consider myself a "vicarious experiencer," as I have read enough accounts of NDEs to conclude that they are not all hallucinations. As a number of psychical researchers have said, no one case is strong enough to convince them; rather, it is the cumulative evidence. That's why I put together the 30 or so quotations of distinguished scientists and scholars in the appendix at the end of my book. A person can read the reports of these various men over time, but one tends to forget many of them, although she may very well bury them in the subconscious. I believe seeing them all in one reading might impact some true skeptics. It's one thing to say a particular researcher might have been duped by a particular medium at a particular time, quite another to read the accounts of 30 or more and conclude that they were all duped over and over again. Many of the researchers I've quoted spent years investigating mediums and sat with dozens of them.

> Bottom line: It would be great if we could all have mystical experiences, Kundalini awakenings, whatever, but the best most of us can do is become "vicarious experiencers."“

Now, if we are right, then there is the question of what to do with these discoveries and how to apply it to our lives. Well that is the next step, and it is what truth seekers and open-minded researchers think and ponder about.

One independent film has come out lately though, which attempts to address that - *What the bleep do we know?* The film addresses the latest discoveries in quantum physics and the power of our thoughts. Playing in several states, people have been seeing it multiple times and it has been receiving standing ovations at its showings. One of its most important messages is that contrary to what most people think, thoughts are not harmless. They do not just pass through your head and then are gone. Rather, they help slowly program your subconscious mind and instincts, creating instincts that make you do things without knowing why, often resulting in control dramas of all kinds which are like loop programs that repeat itself. Check its website for more info (http://www.whatthebleep.com) or enter the film title on YouTube to watch it.

For most paranormal phenomena, the jury is still out, and the evidence is controversial and unclear. However, the evidence for telepathy and ghosts, for instance, is very strong when you combine the scientific evidence and overwhelming widespread anecdotal evidence throughout history. Therefore, they are very likely to be real and in all likelihood there is something to it other than fraud, delusion, mistake or misperception.

According to Lew Paz, author of *Pushing Ultimates*, there is a safe middle ground between science and mysticism that should benefit both sides in their search for truth:

> “All scientists have a responsibility to broaden their comprehension of the human situation. An astute skepticism is necessary in the pursuit of truth, but it must be flexible and open to varied possibilities, unhampered by a narrow materialistic orientation. Despite the excessive naivety rife within the New Age movement, the intelligent scientist can’t toss the entire 5,000 year history of

> mysticism aside, for a century of valid empirical research clearly reveals deeper dimensions of human existence do exist.
>
> Science can never provide us with a total grasp of existence, and any "theory of everything" based on empirical evidence alone would not be all encompassing. The intuitive insights of poets, the visions of mystics and saints, the explorations of shamans, plus the psychological and psychedelic research of different fields of science, certainly count in any attempt at total description. But, though science cannot provide us with an understanding of the whole, it can assist us in cultivating a greater radius of comprehension. Though not the royal road to wisdom many have thought it to be, science is a fine tool and an important avenue toward self-knowledge and overall knowledge of our existential-cosmic situation, Unfortunately, far too many use science to build a bulwark against the insights brought forth by explorations of the mind's archetypal depths and transcendent dimensions. Scientists and skeptics of materialistic persuasion tend toward a bias similar to religious fundamentalists zealously defending their belief system."

After all, all it takes to prove the existence of something is one real case, as William James points out,

> "If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to prove that no crows are; it is enough to prove one single crow to be white."
> --William James

Regardless of your belief about the paranormal, the important thing is to keep an open mind and not rush to judgments based on our personal world views.

> "Doubt everything or believe everything: these are two equally convenient strategies. With either we dispense with the need for reflection." - Henri Poincare

Against critics and skeptics, we must follow our conscience, heart, and intuition. After all, as Martin Caidin reminds us:

> "What you believe someone else can or can’t do hasn't got beans with the doing. Or lack of doing. Just go back through your history books and you’ll discover that just about everything you take for granted today in your daily lives was absolutely impossible not so many years ago." - Martin Caidin

The pseudoskeptics and scoffers should heed the words of the progressive researcher Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, a current pioneer in psi research with groundbreaking discoveries, who says in the introduction of his book *The Sense of Being Stared At*:

> "I believe it is more scientific to explore phenomena we do not understand than to pretend they do not exist. I also believe it is less frightening to recognize that the seventh sense is part of our biological nature, shared with many other animal species, than to treat it as weird or supernatural."

The problem is that these phenomena, even if real, don't fit into conventional paradigms of reality. Therefore, what we need to do is update our beliefs and world views to include these facts and find new paradigms that account for them. In the meantime, we should keep in mind that the beauty of mysteries and paranormal phenomena lies not in finding the answers to every question, but in the awe and appreciation we have for them. Therein lies the great lesson that there is always "more to learn" and "something better out there".

As to expanding ourselves beyond our own paradigms, Mr. Paz states beautifully:

> "The intelligent, open, and questioning mind does not have to remain limited to a barren materialistic orientation of reality, or succumb to the delusions of religion or overly simplified mysticism. Millions among us can become the companions of the great sages, true poets, profound musicians, gifted artists, philosophers, and scientists of real merit. We can travel with those who know that the brain's magnificent electro-chemical surge of embodied consciousness, in its dynamic ferment, transcends its own activity, igniting frequencies that resonate with dimensions far beyond what we are ordinarily aware of. To know yourself is to know of these things, for such exploration expands our consciousness, enriches

> our minds, and makes us capable of moving ever nearer to the essential truth of our astonishing existence."

There is a new paradigm now in science and quantum physics called the Holographic Paradigm which explains and allows for paranormal phenomena to exist. You can read about it in one of my favorite books, *The Holographic Universe* by Michael Talbot, or right now in this thought-provoking summary by David S. Walonick, Ph.D. here:

http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Holographic_Reality.htm

Let me close on this with some eloquent profound quotes for you to ponder.

> "Let the mind be enlarged... to the grandeur of the mysteries, and not the mysteries contracted to the narrowness of the mind" - Francis Bacon
>
> "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't." - Mark Twain
>
> "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." - Albert Einstein
>
> “It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware.” – Albert Einstein
>
> “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes.” - Marcel Proust, French novelist
>
> “We all go on the same search,
> looking to solve the same old mystery.
> We will not, of course, ever solve it.
> We will finally inhabit the Mystery.”
> - Ray Bradbury, SF writer.

And finally, Einstein says it all with:

> *"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world. All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it.”*

- Albert Einstein

Thank you for reading my book. Comments can be sent to me at scepcop@debunkingskeptics.com or posted in my forum at: http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/forum/index.php

Sincerely,
Winston Wu

View Reader Responses at
http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Reader_Responses.htm

My other Debunking Articles can be found at:
http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Articles.htm

New Developments and Research

For the latest developments and research in psychical research and para-studies, see:

http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Developments.htm

For links, blogs and books on PseudoSkepticism and Paranormal Research, see my current updated list at:

http://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Links.htm

Great Paranormal Blogs

Michael Prescott – Blog of Novelist and Paranormal Researcher Michael Prescott. Very thorough and praised in paranormal circles.
http://michaelprescott.typepad.com/

Dear Radin – Blog of Dean Radin, Psi Researcher of UNLV and Author of *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*.
http://www.deanradin.com/

Leo MacDonald - Awesome paranormal blog, very comprehensive.
http://www.paranormalandlifeafterdeath.blogspot.com/

Paranormalia – Fantastic comprehensive blog on paranormal issues by Robert McLuhan.
http://monkeywah.typepad.com/paranormalia/

Subversive Thinking – An excellent and extensive paranormal blog by Jime.
http://subversivethinking.blogspot.com/

Paradigm Experiment – Blog of Jim Clark. Deep analysis of different belief systems and paradigms.
http://www.theparadigmexperiment.blogspot.com/

Recommended Books

Randi's Prize: What Sceptics say about the paranormal, why they are wrong and why it matters by Robert McLuhan. An analysis of the fallacies and problems of the pseudoskeptic movement and organizations.

The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena by Dean Radin, UNLV researcher. Presents robust evidence from scientific studies that psi is real and no longer in doubt, and explains why skeptics still have the attitude against it that they do.

Parapsychology and the Skeptics by Chris Carter. A groundbreaking new book about the real research in Parapsychology and the Skeptics who are against it.

Science and the Near Death Experience by Chris Carter. Explains why Near Death Experiences (NDEs) offer evidence of an afterlife and discredits the psychological and physiological explanations for them. Challenges materialist arguments against consciousness surviving death.

The End of Materialism: How Evidence of the Paranormal is Bringing Science and Spirit Together by Charles Tart, perhaps his best book.

The Holographic Universe by Michael Talbot - A fascinating book that will stretch your mind and imagination to areas you never fathomed. The "holographic model" presented is like a unified theory that explains almost all common paranormal and supernatural phenomena.

Under the Tree by Greg Stone – A very enlightening novel of a man in a coma experiencing an NDE, while his loved ones and friends discuss NDE's in his hospital. All arguments on both sides of the NDE controversy are presented in clear easy-to-understand language. A must read for any NDE enthusiast or seeker.

The Power of Premonitions by Larry Dossey, M.D. – A compelling collection of cases suggesting that precognitive premonitions are real and part of our everyday lives.

Mind-Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Abilities by Russell Targ and Harold E. Puthoff of SRI – From the book's site: This book is a lucid and

fascinating record of historic experiments—historic because they put the seal of "hard" physical science upon evidence that some degree of psychic ability is universal—a phenomenon straight out of science fiction that actually happened, and can be made to happen again in any laboratory! The scientists even offer a "recipe" for developing your own ESP "information channel."